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ABSTRACT

This document contains three commissioned papers and other materials from a 2-day conference. "Politics, Policy, Practice and Personal Responsibility: Adult Education in an Era of Welfare Reform" (Deborah D'Amico) examines the relationship between literacy, poverty, and welfare reform and the implications of those relationships for literacy practice. "Welfare, Jobs, and Basic Skills: The Employment Prospects of Welfare Recipients in the Most Populous U.S. Counties" (Alec R. Levenson, Elaine Reardon, Stefanie R. Schmidt) evaluates the basic skills and employment prospects of current adult recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. "Families First: Implications of Welfare Reform for Tennessee Adult Basic Education" (Connie White, Mary Ziegler, Beth Bingman) compares Tennessee's Families First program, which contains special provisions for individuals functioning at or below grade level 8.9, with other state welfare reform programs. "Themes from the Small Group Discussions" (Hal Beder) provides an overview of discussions about the issues and problems raised by the Personal Responsibility Act and ways adult literacy instruction and the adult literacy education system should respond to welfare reform. Concluding the document are the conference recommendations on practice, policy, and research. Two papers include substantial bibliographies. (MN)

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National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy

THE IMPACT OF WELFARE REFORM ON ADULT LITERACY EDUCATION: CONFERENCE PAPERS AND THEMES FROM SMALL GROUP SESSIONS

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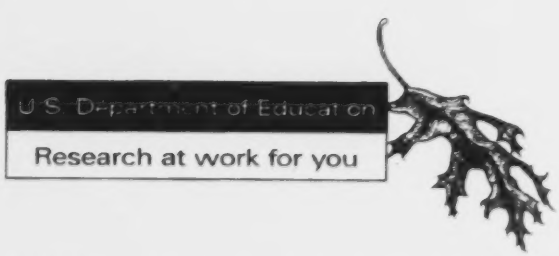

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THE IMPACT OF WELFARE REFORM ON ADULT LITERACY EDUCATION: CONFERENCE PAPERS AND THEMES FROM SMALL GROUP SESSIONS

NCSALL REPORTS #10
April 1999

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THE IMPACT OF WELFARE REFORM ON ADULT LITERACY EDUCATION: CONFERENCE PAPERS AND THEMES FROM SMALL GROUP SESSIONS

Introduction

On June 19 and 20, 1998, a NCSALL-sponsored conference entitled "The Impact of Welfare Reform on Adult Literacy Education" was held at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey. The program for June 19 featured three commissioned papers followed by small group discussion sessions. The papers were authored and presented by Deborah D'Amico, Alec Levinson et al., and Connie White. On June 20, small groups discussed the implications of welfare reform for adult literacy practice, research and policy.

A recorder charged with preparing "minutes" was assigned to each of the small groups. This report contains the three commissioned papers, a summary of the small group sessions and the recommendations of the conference.

POLITICS, POLICY, PRACTICE AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY: ADULT EDUCATION IN AN ERA OF WELFARE REFORM

by

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POLITICS, POLICY, PRACTICE AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY: ADULT EDUCATION IN AN ERA OF WELFARE REFORM

> *In the popular discourse of workplace literacy and skill requirements, we seem to tell just a few stories. We are able to tell sad stories of people who live impoverished lives and cause others to suffer because they don't know how to read and write. Or we are able to tell happy, Horatio Alger-type stories of people who prosper and contribute to the common good because they have persevered and become literate. We have our dominant myths, our story grammars, if you will, of success and work, from which it is hard to break free. Other stories, with their alternate viewpoints, different voices and other realities, can help us amend, qualify, and fundamentally challenge the popular discourse of literacy and work* (Hull, 1997:28-29).

> *To survive in the political and popular world of literacy education seems to have meant a willingness to accept, not challenge, assumptions. However, renewal and the long-term survival of the field rest not with acceptance, but with its exact opposite. They will depend on analysis, questioning, risk taking, and above all, the faith that literacy education is worth doing* (Quigley, 1997:32).

Introduction

In this paper, following the examples set by Quigley and Hull, I try to challenge the prevailing discourse of policy with respect to literacy, poverty, work and welfare reform. In a previous article, I reviewed data on the effectiveness of education and training policies with respect to employment of both welfare recipients and displaced workers (1996) and more recently I completed a research review of studies on adult education and welfare to work initiatives for the National Institute for Literacy (1998). This paper does not present extensive data on either of these topics, but rather reflects critically on what that data means for our field. Those interested in reviewing the data are referred to the two prior publications.

Prevailing policy implies that because literacy level is clearly related to employment, the proper role for adult educators vis-à-vis learners on public assistance is to deliver them job ready and to place them in jobs as well. Instead, we know and research shows that many more factors, beyond the literacy level of applicants, are involved in the transition from public assistance to employment. These factors include the state of the local labor market, the racial and gender

segmentation that characterize employment in the United States, and access to social networks that can provide entry to employment (Holzer, 1996; Newman, 1995; Lafer, 1992; Schneider, 1997). Moreover, for many, the path to work and related education is not smooth, quick or linear (Pavetti, 1993; Herr and Halpern, 1991), and involves needs and circumstances not likely to be addressed by short term job readiness or work experience programs mandated by current policy.

As the research referenced above shows, both socio-economic systemic factors—such as what kinds of jobs are available to whom and individual ones—such as substance abuse, and mental and physical health issues—mediate the relationship between literacy level and employment success. To complicate matters further, anthropological studies of literacy in workplaces and training programs indicate that our understanding of the relationship between literacy and the kind of reading, writing and math skills actually used at work is seriously flawed (Hull, 1997). And though much of the rhetoric of welfare to work programming implies that even entry level employment is synonymous with self-sufficiency, adequate income for single mothers and their families may require not only employment, but the kind of jobs available to those with post-secondary education (Bos, 1996). All of this data calls into question the often simplistic association between raising literacy levels and individual success that underlies adult education policy and practice in an era of welfare reform. One clear example of the latter is that, under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 that will in future subsume adult education funding, the criteria for success of programs includes not only indicators of progress in literacy and English language skills but job placement and promotion.

And yet, education *is* important to individuals' struggle for economic self-sufficiency, and we have devoted our professional lives to providing education for adults whose motivation for seeking it is often a desire for a job or career advancement. Current policy often pits the dedicated practitioner in us against the educator who understands the errors of the facile equation of have literacy, will work. Those who see part of their job as helping people to, in Friere's words, read the world as well as the word, or to write for self-expression as well as to fill out an application, feel uncomfortably pushed in the direction of becoming trainers, rather than educators (Friere & Macedo, 1987).

As a literacy researcher and writer, my discomfort stems from the stories we have to tell to keep literacy funded and worthy in the public eye. This occurs when I write proposals, reports, and papers that require accepting assumptions that govern prevailing adult education policy and funding. When I do so, I try to find connecting points between these imperatives and my own beliefs and understanding of adult education, its goals, and its practice. I might, for example,

argue that contextualized literacy instruction aiming at work readiness and workplace competency is in line with theory about how adults learn best when education is provided in a meaningful framework. I might further argue that educating low literate adults benefits everyone: the individuals themselves, employers, society, children, etc. It's not that these things are false, but that they are only part of the much more complicated story of literacy and its relation to work, and by extension to poverty and welfare reform. Increasingly, it is the complications, the alternative versions of stories, and other perspectives on literacy and its purposes that are silenced. I worry about the impact of this silence on our field, our practice, and the learners in our programs. Isn't literacy instruction, after all, about breaking silence? If we, among the most literate in our society, are so silenced, how can we model the potential of literacy to give voice—one of the four goals articulated by learners nationwide in the survey done by Equipped for the Future (Stein, 1997)?

Contextualizing Literacy, Poverty and Welfare Reform

In the kind of writing we do for funders and formal reports, the perspective is necessarily a limited one. Literacy and its relation to work are considered within a narrow framework that excludes the voices of learners and most educators. I want to now consider this relationship in terms of the political and economic conditions that structure the experiences of the working and non-working poor with respect to education and work, as this experience is rendered in the research of anthropologists. While I believe it is important to set the parameters of the discussion in this way, my purpose in doing so is to inform a discussion of policy, practice and activism among adult educators, one that explores and changes our silence around the structural conditions governing access to work and to education.

A prevailing assumption of welfare reform, strongly suggested by the legislation's title: Personal Responsibility Act, is that poverty and joblessness are caused by a failure of will, by the behavior of individuals, as influenced by their cultural beliefs. A second assumption, and one that guides education and training policy, is that some individuals are unemployed because they lack the literacy and skills necessary for available jobs. In her study of education and training for welfare recipients done in the early 90s, Churchill made the distinction between such assumptions about welfare, made by "citizen-taxpayers" and politicians, and the views of women on welfare themselves. Education and training policies for these women were based on the views of others, Churchill notes, and the welfare to work programs created in response to these policies were spectacularly unsuccessful. Such programs, she argues, constitute behavioral solutions to what

are structural economic problems. For example, the false behaviorist assumption that the majority of people receiving public assistance don't work because they lack incentive masks the fact that most people circulate between low paying, unstable jobs and welfare. This fact has more to do with the nature of the entry level job market, and the lack of national child care and health care systems, than with attitudes and behavior toward work (1995: 10, 26).

Both Hull (1997) and Schultz (1997) raise questions about the "skills gap", or the notion that employers cannot find workers who have the skills necessary for available jobs. Hull situates her position as follows:

> As I question the popular discourse, I will not be claiming that there is no need to worry about literacy, or that there is not a problem with helping people to live up to their potential, or that the nature of work and the literacies associated with it are not . . changing radically. However, I will be questioning the assumptions that seem to underlie popular beliefs about literacy, work and learning. . . . I will argue that the popular discourse of workplace literacy tends to underestimate and devalue human potential and mis-characterize literacy as a curative for problems that literacy alone cannot solve (11).

Literacy by itself cannot, as research shows, easily or often overcome the effects of class, race and gender on access to both education and job opportunities. As Billie Holiday once sang, "Them that got shall get, them that's not shall lose, so the Bible says, and it still is news." Although such news is not often reported in the mainstream media, a recent study by Schneider of the effectiveness of job training and education credentials for moving individuals from welfare to work adds meat to the true bones of Holiday's words. The study was conducted with the cooperation of the Philadelphia Private Industry Council and was a project of the Institute for the Study of Civic Values (1997a). Data was collected from 338 individuals currently enrolled in training programs and community college. Only 6% of the study population had never been on welfare and 83% were receiving public assistance at the time of the study (1997a, p. 1, 4). Schneider found four distinct patterns of work experience among participants in the study. One group had limited or no work experience, and comprised 23% of the population studied (13% who had never had a job and 10% who had only had one job for less than one year). A second group, low skill workers, had no high school diploma or limited skills, and moved from low skill job to low skill job. A third group were displaced workers, between 60 and 75% of whom had held their first job five years or more. Finally, there were migrants (mostly Puerto Rican citizens, and

refugees), some of whom were highly educated and skilled and needed to learn the language and acquire experience in the US labor market, and others who were low skilled and had limited education (1997a, p. 32-34). These patterns were found to hold among a larger sample of 800 Philadelphians in seven interrelated studies between 1992 and 1996 (1997b, p. 3-4).

Schneider found that the use and outcomes of training programs varied by work experience, education, and race. Not surprisingly, those without high school diplomas often attended more than one training program and "appeared to be on a training track which led nowhere." People with entry level clerical work experience went into training in either clerical or helping professions, which often translated into related, but often low paying, jobs. People with previous work experience in helping professions got training in those professions, which translated into full time, decent paying training-related jobs primarily for those with high school diplomas. Finally, the study found that employment in highly paid, blue collar jobs had no relationship to training (1997a, p. 16).

In access to training programs, a similar kind of hierarchy was found. African Americans enrolled primarily in mandatory job development and job specific skills programs. Whites and Asians were served by community college and tuition based programs while Latinos were left out of training for the most part (1997a, p. 6).

About the less than one quarter who had no real work history, the study concludes:

> First, while not having a high school diploma did not help in finding employment, the majority of people who did not finish high school in fact have worked (1997a, p. 32). The group which never worked seems to have in common family, neighborhood, or personal characteristics which lead them to be isolated from employment networks and to have other issues which keep them from working (1997c). Anthropological research on low income populations show that family ties often place women in a dense web of obligations to family and friends (Stack, 1974). Since work is often unavailable and unreliable, these kinship obligations become more important than work or school (Schneider, 1997a, p. 32).

Schneider further investigated the influence of circles of family, friends, neighbors and acquaintances (or the social networks of individuals) in her

research. She found that while 94% of the people in the study had been on public assistance, 87% had worked for wages as adults: "In many cases, the population working in low wage or even working class jobs is interchangeable with the population on welfare. Therefore, policy makers and program developers cannot assume that this population simply needs training for appropriate jobs and work experience" (1997a, p. 29). Schneider also notes:

> The dramatic differences in career and training paths across race and nationality and gender reveals that patterns of discrimination, as well as socialization towards certain kinds of employment, persists in the 1990s. Part of this is due to the extreme segregation of Philadelphia and the poor quality of its public schools. The fact that many of the people who had never worked or were in low end service jobs despite training had finished high school shows the quality of education for many low wage workers in Philadelphia (1997d, p. 10).

Part of the difference in training and career paths lies in social networks that are accessible to individuals of different class and race status. As Schneider observes: "Friends and family can only provide advice based on their won experience and world view." The confluence of networks constrained by race and class was poignantly illustrated by an African American who was the first in his family to graduate from college and who held a professional job for many years but was excluded from the white network of colleagues in his office. When he was let go as a result of downsizing, he had neither professional contacts nor a family who could provide leads to jobs in his field (1997c).

The most successful participants in Schneider's study were those who could combine clerical or professional work experience with a high school diploma or better, and with additional training and social networks that could provide contacts and support. In short, them that had some, got more; those with less, need more. But who is willing to recognize and provide the kind of extensive, expensive support necessary to make up for the social capital denied to the poor, single mothers, the uneducated, and people of color?

One successful model that does so is Project Match, in Chicago. Project Match serves the hardest to reach and employ among public assistance recipients. Its participants, drawn from the Cabrini Green housing project in Chicago, are 99% African American unmarried women, 60% of whom are under 25 at the point of enrollment. Only 55% have any work experience at all, and 58% come from homes supported by welfare. In response to these multiple barriers to

employment. Project Match has designed an individualized, human development approach to move individuals from welfare to work. They use as a model of this journey an "incremental ladder," which reflects the fact that progress is not linear, but may involve setbacks and many small steps forward. Project Match concentrates on the lower rungs of the ladder to work by offering individuals activities that help develop work-like behavior and by rewarding them as they go along. For example, an individual might be encouraged to get her child to school on time, then to volunteer in her child's school and eventually and gradually to move to a regular volunteer assignment. She might be recognized in the local newsletter for her contribution. Project Match has no prescribed trajectory of education and work, but rather allows for the uneven ways in which people make decisions, commitments and progress. Other features of the program include the creation of "proxy networks" that can assist with job searches and references, and intensive post placement follow-up, in recognition of initial job loss among the majority of participants. This approach has resulted in a 47% increase in employment and a 23% increase in wages among participants (Herr and Halpern, 1994; Olson et al., 1990).

In the first and only study to compare the monthly household budgets of welfare-reliant and wage reliant single mothers in four U.S. cities, sociologist Kathryn Edin and anthropologist Laura Lein (1997) successfully debunk theories that attribute poverty and welfare receipt to cultural attitudes and behavior. They examine predicted patterns of expenditures and strategies, based on culture of poverty theories, across differences of race, marital status, family background, neighborhood and whether a woman relied on welfare or her wages for support. They conclude:

> Our data do not tell a strong story of cultural forces shaping mothers' spending, survival strategies or hardship, though they do suggest some unexpected differences among groups. Foremost, mothers who received welfare, mothers who had never married, mothers who lived in poor neighborhoods and were from a minority group exhibited more frugal spending behavior than their more advantaged counterparts (213).

The authors state that the problem of welfare "dependency" is a labor market structural problem, not a problem of willingness on the part of individuals to work:

> The essence of the "welfare trap" is not that public aid warps women's personalities or makes them pathologically dependent. . .

> Rather, it is that low-wage jobs usually make single mothers even worse off than they were on welfare (87).

As the mothers in Edin and Lein's study put it, their problem is that, given the lack of affordable reliable child care and health care in this country, they must constantly choose between their roles as parents, on the one hand, and providers, on the other. Has any set of circumstances so laid bare the contradictions of gender in the United States as their predicament? Suddenly, how much we have relied on single mothers to do the impossible becomes the problem of service providers in communities and policy makers at the state level. The stark reality of the high cost of child care and the low wages paid to many workers raises questions that would be obvious to anyone not hypnotized by the media portrayal of joblessness as a failure of will. How is it that these women can be working full time jobs and not making enough to support their families? Why is it that wages are so low that many families are better off on public assistance than they are when working? Why do we provide health care only for the non-working and the aged? How can the belief that mothers should take care of children, at the root of the refusal to provide publicly supported quality child care, be reconciled with the demand that poor women work at wages too low to pay for private child care? Subsidized child care during a transition to work is helpful, but assumes that an entry level job will lead to opportunities for work with benefits and wages high enough to pay for child care. Perhaps at no other time in our recent history has this been less true. Jobs are increasingly precarious and, part-time, and the opportunity to rise in an industry or field seems to occur at the same educational level as does the likelihood of earning a wage that enables a single mother to meet her family's needs: the postsecondary level (Bos 1996; Grubb, 1992; 1995).

It is interesting that most mothers on welfare assess the relationship between education, training and employment in much the same way many researchers do. They have little faith in the kinds of publicly funded programs to which they are referred, most of which aim to place them in exactly the kinds of jobs they have had and from which they seek escape (see Merrifield, 1997 and Grubb, 1996 for data on the failure of such training programs). Nor do the vast majority need work readiness preparation. Rather, their aim is to enter and complete high quality two and four year training programs that prepare them for occupations that pay a living wage (Edin and Lein, 1997: 229). Moreover, Edin and Lein report that these realities were recognized and acted upon in one rural country in Minnesota. The local JOBS program recognized the short sightedness of most training, and only funded technical and community college programs that had a 60% placement rate. The result was that most mothers found work at $8 an hour or better (Zucker, quoted in Edin and Lein, 10997: 234). Similarly, David

Rosen reports that Wyoming's welfare caseload dropped 65% last year, which constituted the nation's biggest drop. Moreover, two-thirds of those leaving the rolls are actually getting jobs, in stark contrast to cities like New York (Hernandez, 1998; Finder, 1998). According to the Boston Globe article quoted by Rosen on the National Literacy Advocacy on-line discussion list created to provide a forum for policy issues in adult education, this is due to "a unique small town approach" where individuals are encouraged and helped to find jobs "at their own pace, with support instead of threats, flexible guidelines rather than rigid rules." Furthermore, Wyoming does not have workfare; rather, the state requires only that individuals are trying to find a job in order to keep their benefits until the five year limit. Plans for individuals may include job search, basic skills instruction, and a host of counseling and other support services. A final note: the ratio of caseworkers to clients in Wyoming is 1:14; according to Rosen, in Massachusetts it is 1:120. These success stories echo the reams of research done by Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation on welfare to work strategies (see Gueron and Pauly, 1991: 34-5). High cost, high quality services cost government money in the short term but pave the way to higher incomes and job stability for public assistance recipients over the long term. But is anyone listening to these reports of "best practices?" Not now, because the criteria for success in welfare to work programs has shifted from lifting individuals out of poverty to reducing government expenditures, thus favoring low cost solutions least likely to reduce poverty or lead to employment at wages that can permanently sustain families.

As I outlined in my NIFL research, other nations resolve these issues differently than we do here in the US. They have education and training systems that prepare individuals for jobs at low or no cost, and they have mechanisms for ensuring that wages are commensurate with education and training (Freeman 1994). Examples of such mechanisms include variations on centralized collective bargaining in Sweden and Italy, and extensive training systems for workers that are tied to strong union representation in Germany and Japan. Given the power of "the market" in US political discourse, such mechanisms are unlikely to find acceptance here at any time in the near future. How then, can mothers who rely on public assistance or low wage jobs attain enough education to earn incomes that sustain families? Certainly, this is unlikely to happen in New York City, where education for public assistance recipients is discouraged, frustrated, and for all intents and purposes, forbidden, and where workfare policies have caused the number of welfare recipients pursuing higher education to drop by half, from 26,000 to 13,000 (Casey, 1998:14).

I will leave the discussion of the labor market for public assistance recipients to the economists, except to note that research has shown it to be segmented by race and gender (Holzer,1996; Lafer, 1992). Not only is there a political refusal to create jobs for public assistance recipients where there are not enough, but also affirmative action is in demise. Given the disproportionate numbers of people of color and women on public assistance, can anything but deepening poverty and inequality be the result? Where workfare workers are assigned to work in the public sector, there is evidence that they are displacing union workers with benefits (Greenhouse, 1998: A1). This completes the attempt to roll back all of the progress made by unions and by civil rights struggles, and to leave public assistance recipients and low wage workers defenseless in a labor market in which corporate interests and government policies combine to reduce wages, benefits, and job security.

Implications for Literacy Practice

These conditions, though external to literacy programs, affect learners and thus, literacy practices. Yet, as Fingeret tell us, although our field has amassed much descriptive research, experiential anecdotes, and how-to-manuals, we have not explored some of the underlying assumptions, values, and beliefs about literacy and the relationship between it and other social problems (quoted in Quigley, 1997:93). However, although "we can-and usually do-refrain from asking philosophical questions . . .we cannot avoid acting according to philosophical assumptions (Blakely, quoted in Quigley, 1997:93)." And our practice can suffer as a result.

How? Work by Gowen (1990; 1992) and Gowen and Bartlett (1997) link popular discourse to classroom practice, by considering how the attempts of educators to create contextualized literacy programs in the workplace, and even to adopt critical pedagogy in the classroom, are limited if they do not first understand the role of literacy in the lives of learners, the class, race and gender realities of learners' lives, and the conflicting interests of workers and employers. Gowen's work exposes the effect of erroneous assumptions about what workers know, what they need to know, what bosses and supervisors think they know, and how well meaning literacy instructors think they should learn. In so doing, she shows us that the people who end up in our literacy programs not only occupy very different positions in the class, race and gender hierarchy than their employers, teachers, and others who make decisions about them, but also that this means they have different ideas, goals, reasons for learning, and economic and political interests.

In Gowen's ethnography of a hospital workplace literacy class (1992), workers resisted the contextualization of literacy by objecting to content related to tasks that in their opinion, they had already mastered. In particular, the use of "Weekly Tips" memos from supervisors was resented. As one worker put it: "I've been at King Memorial for 23 years, and I feel like if I don't know how to clean now, I will not learn . . . That's not going to help me get my GED I don't think (Gowen, 1990, p. 261)." This comment highlights the different goals for workplace literacy that management and workers held, and the opposing views of worker competency and its relationship to literacy that existed. Gowen situates the resistance of workers to this kind of class in the social relations between labor and management at the hospital, as well as in the history of race relations in the region.

In another article about the domestic abuse experienced by learners in a literacy program, Gowen and Bartlett provide this sobering lesson:

> Adult educators must realize that women abuse survivors are likely to be participants in worker education programs, especially those designed for front line, hourly-wage earning, low skill workers. This is specifically because the two factors that put women at the risk of violence are low education and low wages—the very segment of the workforce that is described as most in need of additional training. . . .And when women gain the education and skills to break out of abusive situations, they are likely to experience escalated forms of abuse, derision, or even death. For these reasons, working with women survivors requires special skill, sensitivity, and an awareness of the sometimes fatal consequences of empowerment (1997, p. 150).

The authors go on to recount the frustration of a literacy teacher, who in her attempt to use participatory pedagogy encountered the resistance of women for whom silence was armor. They do not argue against this pedagogy, but rather situate it within the perspective of poor, abused women, and learn from this how to adapt instructional methodology for these learners. As in Gowen's previous work on women hospital workers, Gowen and Bartlett show how the assumptions of educators, policy makers, and employers differ from those of learners in ways that reflect the realities of race, class and gender and prevent effective teaching and learning in literacy programs:

> What we must conclude from our experiences is that while collaborative and critical approaches to literacy education might be

> quite appropriate for many women, they might not provide a good starting point for women who have been silenced by violence and abuse and whose goals are circumscribed by secrets that "take up all the space (1997, p. 153).

We cannot ignore the fundamental factors that constrain students' lives—the things they know and feel and live every day—and expect them to participate in literacy practice as we define it. Nor can we organize curricula as if learners' interests are perfectly aligned with those of funders, employers, and policy makers.

Assessment and evaluation also bear the effects of our failure to fully contextualize the lives of learners. Union educators have pointed out that the assumption underlying much of workplace literacy is that workers and management have the same interests in education. Certainly, some interests are shared, but others aren't. More importantly, educational programs that direct learners toward participating in and measuring up to existing standards, understanding existing systems, and complying with organizational goals usually leave out avenues for conceptualizing, supporting, and making change. What the work of anthropologists shows is that the population in our programs needs not only literacy but also an expansion of existing opportunities for both work and education. We and our students need to understand not only how education affects work, but also how racism and sexism, and the social capital that comes with class status, determine which jobs are available to whom.

Writing other Stories: The Role of Adult Educators in Welfare Reform

My purpose in writing the above depressing pages is neither to make us despair about our role as educators nor to destroy our agency in making change by showing the depth of change that's needed. We will despair only if we accept that the primary role of educators is to prepare individuals for the kinds of jobs that are currently available to them.

As adult educators face policy, practice and research issues within a context of welfare reform, clarity about the relationship of education to getting and keeping a job is either assumed or outside the bounds of debate. Yet, false assumptions about this relationship result in conflict and contradictions among research findings, policy stands, and programmatic decisions. For example, research shows that there are many factors other than education that account for an individual's employment. However, despite this, programs are evaluated at least in part on job placement. As a result, curriculum becomes job-driven, as if having

the perfect résumé and the right attitude is all it takes to get a job, and as if this is the primary subject matter of adult education. This disjuncture between the many faceted reality of employment and policy assumptions makes adult education appear a dismal failure; if our purpose is to get people jobs and we are not doing that, we do not deserve funding. Thus, adult education is marginalized in welfare to work policy and funding, and the field occupies an ambiguous status: between K-12 and higher education, and a poor second to "Work First" in state welfare reform plans. Our historic lack of success in advocating for ourselves and our learners is underscored by the conclusions drawn from research looking at the role of adult education in welfare to work initiatives. These imply that, despite the undisputed association of higher levels of literacy and education with higher wages and higher levels of employment, there is no evidence that participation in a literacy program helps individuals get jobs (D'Amico, 1997: iii). While the issue of assessment and outcomes in adult education is important and in part responsible for our inability to demonstrate the accomplishments of our programs and our learners, this cannot be the reason we are excluded from current welfare reform initiatives. I say this because these initiatives do include workfare and employer incentives, policies lacking any evidence of their effectiveness (on workfare, see Leon, 1995; Finder, 1998; on employer subsidies see Offner, 1997). In short, political will is lacking for the level of educational investment, ancillary services, and income and employment policies that research shows are necessary to move the poor into stable jobs.

The underlying tangle of contradictions that abound in the literature I reviewed for my NIFL report on adult education and welfare reform (1998) derive from the policy assumption that individuals need education and training to prepare for the existing job market. This assumption, from which most of our funding proceeds, leaves out the class, race and gender dynamics of the labor market, as well as questions about the availability of jobs, what they pay, how long they last, where they lead, and whether or not an individual hired for them can afford health and child care. Yet, these are precisely the conditions our learners face in the job market, and we and they have the tales to tell that illustrate the cost of the assumption that what matters is not these factors, but only their willingness to work and their education or literacy level. Certainly, the latter is part of the picture of who does what and for what wages, but access to education is increasingly restricted by the same barriers of class, race and gender as is the job market. I have had the opportunity to speak based on my NIFL research in a number of different settings, and I find that many educators are caught between the experience of their participants and the assumptions of policy.

Because of the association between literacy and work, we proudly claim the success stories of learners who get and keep jobs as our own. Seeing literacy as part of a web of factors that influence the ability of individuals to support families by working is not the same as assessing literacy programs by their ability to place individuals in jobs. Yet, as Rich points out, the purpose of education is increasingly defined as quick job placement, obscuring the difference between education and training (1997). Indeed, I found this to be so even in some of the exemplary studies cited above. The Schneider study, for example, referred to GED preparation as GED training, and at times this prevented me from sorting out differences in effect from education and training in the article. Rich, a curriculum and staff developer at the New York City Department of Employment, examines the differences in definitions and practice between education and training. Prominent in the text of the article are the Webster New World Dictionary definitions of educate and train:

> Train: to instruct so as to make proficient or qualified or to condition (as a child or puppy) to perform bodily functions in appropriate places.
>
> Educate: To develop the knowledge, skills, mind or character of; to teach or instruct, to form or develop.

While there is some overlap in these definitions, the connotations are clear. What is interesting is the association of education with the human mind or character, and of training with the routine and the animal. Arguing, as we all do, that jobs of today are more likely to require the kinds of broad abilities that education develops, such as the SCANS skills or the role maps of Equipped For the Future, Rich suggests that contextualized, learner centered education is preferable to training. She supports her position with a quote from the report of the New York Alliance of educators and trainers, entitled Looking at Literacy, Indicators of Program Quality:

> The overarching goal of a quality literacy program is to help learners become more competent readers, writers, speakers and problem solvers in the contexts of their personal and family lives, the community and the workplaces. This can best be accomplished with effective teachers, who provide a respectful and supportive environment for learning, have high expectations for their students and require them to engage in analysis, investigation and interpretation (New York Alliance, quoted in Rich, 1997, p. 30).

However, in such talk about contextualized literacy, we often leave out much of the context that affects the ability of learners to access jobs and education. We talk about the impact of adult education on learners at work, in families and in communities, assuming the only thing necessary is for them to perform better in these arenas of life. Yet, we work with learners affected negatively by the class, race and gender dimensions of access to good jobs, day care, health care, housing, and community resources. For example, when learners and others on public assistance have difficulty getting and keeping jobs because the babysitter quits or their child becomes ill, do they know that they live in the only major industrialized nation without public child care and some form of national health insurance? Is our education giving learners the information, and the analytic and literacy strategies to make changes in the conditions that govern access to employment?

I was just barely fortunate enough to be steered toward college while in high school, and lucky enough to come of age when the struggle for equal opportunity afforded me a college education, tuition free, at City University of New York. My CUNY education, to the doctorate level, has stood me in good stead both in terms of doing exciting, challenging work and in asking critical questions about the value of that work and about the political and economic context in which it is done. I would like the same for literacy students. Why must liberating education, in their case, be opposed to education for jobs? According to Grubb, narrowly focused training programs for the poor have failed miserably, and training needs to become more learner centered and participatory, more like education, rather than the other way around (1996).

In an ERIC Digest position paper entitled *Work Force Education or Literacy Development: Which Road Should Adult Education Take?*, Susan Imel notes:

> In the current context, adult educators may feel caught in the middle. If they want to be participants in the policy discussions at the state level and partners at the local level in providing educational services to the broad spectrum of work force development customers, they may be excluded by funders if their programs cannot meet the goals of work force development. How can they defend the need for their programs to have broader goals yet still meet the needs of funders? (1998)

I would argue that the answer lies in how you define *workforce* development appropriate for a country with democratic values, as opposed to the *forced work* that characterizes welfare to work policy. The latter is about literacy that prepares

workers to take any job (Gordon, 1995), while the former can and should include social policy and funding directed toward allowing workers opportunities and choices regarding access to education and jobs. Literacy education directed toward a future that includes more than entry level, low paying, unstable jobs is necessary for workforce development of this kind.

With this definition in mind, I think of the exemplary work of Susan Cowles and the TANF recipients at the Oregon community college program at which she works, with its field trips on the Internet and virtual conversations with scientists in Antarctica. Cowles simultaneously develops scientific literacy, technological literacy, basic literacy, and the kinds of skills needed in the best of workplaces, where the ideas and opinions of workers are sought and valued. Her program is not characterized by work readiness content only, but by the broad goals and practices that support understanding the world and one's place in it, and becoming an empowered reader, writer and thinker. I think of the Community Women's Education Project in Philadelphia, whose explicitly Frierian and feminist practice supports both critical pedagogy and the employment aspirations of learners. The CWEP has managed to straddle the political divide between their own world view and that of welfare policy, and has worked successfully with their local Private Industry Council, whom they convinced to support two year community college programs for interested public assistance recipients (Quint and DiMeo, 1998). Again, their triumph is that they have been able to win for participants the opportunity to be truly and broadly educated, in ways that serve the ends of employment and family self-sufficiency. I think also of the Stanley Isaacs Neighborhood Center in New York, and the work of Ira Yankwitt and Charlotte Marchant, who teach political literacy, develop curriculum that supports critical analysis of welfare issues and attempt, with their students, to educate legislators on literacy and welfare concerns. Their students learn to read the word and the world, as they take their words to local and state officials and advocate on their own behalf. In the process, they learn how our political system works and how to organize ideas for effective presentation. I think about Paul Jurmo, a nationally known adult education practitioner and scholar, arguing tirelessly for education for incumbent workers, a necessity if those who get or have jobs are ever to also have opportunity and choice in their work lives. Such education enables workers to move beyond entry level work into more stable and higher paying jobs in which they can truly use their new skills and knowledge.

Policy Issues: Allies and Advocacy

What does it mean to have this kind of liberating vision for education, particularly for education of the poor and the unemployed? It means acknowledging the

dissonance between the interests of employers and workers, between the objectives of funding and the purposes of learners, and between education as a human right, and education as a form of job training. It means providing the intellectual tools to have choices about one's own survival and success strategies as well as to choose political positions and to act on them. It may mean building alliances with organizations who share the broad mission of literacy, and who are working to help create conditions that challenge the fundamental inequalities in access to education and jobs that mark adult learners' lives.

When I worked at the Consortium for Worker Education, I developed, with union education directors, some staff development material for teachers interested in teaching workers about welfare reform issues from the critical stance of how these issues affect the struggles of the working class. This was one activity through which we attempted to build alliances between literacy providers opposed to aspects of welfare reform and unions whose interests were also affected. Literacy workers and students also attended the large rally of the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) in New York, during the town meetings conducted by the Sweeny leadership, and the Central Labor Council, along with churches and other concerned groups, held a forum on education and welfare reform where participants in education programs spoke about their workfare experiences. Although these alliances are episodic and in their infancy, I believe they are an important direction for literacy providers concerned with the real welfare of their students. Labor unions, whatever their flaws and past failings, constitute an important avenue for dealing with the concerns of low wage workers, and with the consequences of workfare for wages and employment locally and nationally. Further evidence for this lies in the strong campaign being waged by New York City unions for expansion of quality public day care programs, and, among some unions, in the attempts to organize workfare workers.

From Philadelphia comes another example of strategic alliances. Ed Schwartz is not a literacy provider but someone who stumbled upon literacy in his efforts to form a citywide coalition to address issues of welfare reform, including housing, jobs, and community impact. He has become a strong advocate for literacy, simply by looking at the statistics on literacy and work on the one hand and at the labor market in the city on the other, and drawing the obvious and ominous

conclusions. His organization, the Institute for Civic Values, has organized a coalition of neighborhood organizations, human service agencies, business associations and unions to fight for jobs, education, and training in the interests of neighborhood revitalization in Philadelphia. The coalition has agreed to work for five broad goals, one of which is: "Lifelong learning, through school reform, adult literacy, job training and community education." At the New Jersey Association for Lifelong Learning, Schwartz said he was motivated to form the coalition because he fears the dire consequences of welfare reform for individuals and communities. To those who would call him an alarmist, he recounts how his predictions about the epidemic rise in homelessness as a result of the changed housing policies of the 80s have all come to pass.

As practitioners privileged to know some of our students' real stories, we have the personal responsibility to create forums where they can articulate them, and to tell them ourselves in places to which our learners do not yet have entry. Secondly, we need to understand the class, race, and gender context of welfare reform, how it is understood, and what it means for our practice. Thirdly, we need to decide on policies that will more effectively represent the needs of learners and of educators and connect with allies who are likely to share our interests.

To do these things, we need to stop and think about how we write about and act on adult literacy issues in an era of welfare reform. We particularly need to consider what it means to implement policies that see job placement as a necessary outcome of education, or those that put practitioners in the position of conforming to legislation with which they are in fundamental disagreement. Our dilemma is whether we can save and enhance programs under current conditions while we continue to argue for education as a fundamental right of adults. If not, we become "literacy trainers," complicit in the belief that the primary purpose of education is to prepare individuals for any job they can get.

Once we recognize the many factors involved in employment for low literate individuals on public assistance, it becomes clear that we cannot argue effectively for increased recognition and funding of adult education by ourselves. We need to join forces with other advocates and with activists among public assistance recipients, along the lines of the Philadelphia model cited above. Our voices are stronger if we raise them in support of adequate child care, transportation, wages, and health care with proponents of these issues that are so wedded to ours and to the needs of adult learners. In this way, the passage of the Personal Responsibility Act can be a catalyst for forming coalitions and partnerships that benefit our work, and adult education can be part of a broad social movement that seeks to increase access to self sufficiency and opportunity along lines of class,

gender and race. At the same time, however, we must also concentrate on providing the best educational support possible, within Workforce Investment funding guidelines, to TANF recipients fighting the five year clock. If learners on public assistance can resolutely continue to seek education, even as they face issues of homelessness and survival for themselves and their children, then we in adult education can surely speak to both their imminent practical concerns *and* their long term development and political empowerment.

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WELFARE, JOBS AND BASIC SKILLS: THE EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS OF WELFARE RECIPIENTS IN THE MOST POPULOUS U.S. COUNTIES

by

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WELFARE, JOBS AND BASIC SKILLS: THE EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS OF WELFARE RECIPIENTS IN THE MOST POPULOUS U.S. COUNTIES

Executive Summary

In August 1996, President Clinton fulfilled a campaign pledge to "end welfare as we know it" by signing into law the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act. This law changed the fundamental nature of the welfare system. Before the law passed, families could receive cash benefits for an indefinite period of time. The 1996 law imposed time limits on the receipt of cash assistance to families with children. In order to underscore the new emphasis on self-sufficiency, the name of the program was changed from Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) to Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). With some exceptions, adults must be employed or be in an activity that will soon lead to work after receiving two years of TANF benefits. Federal funds cannot be used to support those who have been on TANF for more than five years in a lifetime.

This article evaluates the basic skills and employment prospects of current adult TANF recipients. We perform an analysis for the U.S. as a whole, as well as separate analyses for nearly all of the 75 most populous U.S. counties plus the District of Columbia. These counties contain 43 percent of the nation's welfare caseload.

We base our analyses on a measure of basic skills different than formal schooling; the measure comes from the National Adult Literacy Survey. Individuals at the lowest level of literacy, level 1, are able to do very simple tasks such as locating the expiration date on a driver's license, totaling a bank deposit slip, or signing their names. They are unable to do level 2 tasks, such as locating an intersection on a street map, understanding an appliance warranty, filling out a government benefits application, or totaling the costs from an order. Individuals at literacy level 2 can perform these tasks, but cannot perform higher-order tasks such as writing a letter explaining an error on a credit card bill, using a bus schedule, or using a calculator to determine a 10 percent discount.

The results for the U.S. as a whole show that typical TANF recipients have extremely low basic skills: 35 percent are at level 1 and 41 percent are at level 2. Because of their low basic skills, the vast majority of jobs are not open to TANF mothers. The nation's economy would need to create 6 percent more jobs with very low basic skills to fully employ all welfare mothers.

Separate analyses by county show that the impact of welfare reform will vary greatly across the country. In some counties only 1 percent more jobs with very low basic skills are needed; in other counties the number of jobs with very low basic skills will have to increase by more than 20 percent. This means that some counties will witness fierce competition for unskilled jobs because of their large TANF caseloads and the particularly low basic skills of TANF recipients.

Five of the twelve counties that will potentially have the greatest difficulty moving their welfare recipients into jobs are in California, including those containing the cities of Los Angeles and San Diego. The seven other counties that will be the hardest hit by welfare reform are those containing Washington, D.C.; Newark, New Jersey; Detroit, Michigan; Baltimore, Maryland; Chicago, Illinois; New York City; and Miami, Florida.

The calculations assumed that each county will exempt 20 percent of its welfare caseload from the work requirements, the maximum percent allowable under the federal law. Further, not all of the jobs with low basic skills would need to be created immediately; TANF recipients will reach their time limits over the course of the next few years.

The need for improved basic skills among most current and former welfare recipients is acute, regardless of whether they are still on the welfare rolls. Even if we optimistically assume that all former TANF recipients could find full-time jobs, both our earlier and ongoing research predict that many former recipients would still earn less than the income required to provide a subsistence living for their families because of their low basic skills.

In counties where the need for additional low-skill jobs is high, adults with low basic skills will have the greatest difficulty finding work. Current welfare recipients may need literacy training in order to find a private sector job in those counties. In counties where the need for additional low-skill jobs is small, adults with low basic skills have the greatest likelihood of being employed. Because welfare reform emphasizes a "work first" philosophy, recipients are encouraged to find a job – any job – no matter how little it pays. State welfare policies place little importance on learning new math and reading skills, so recipients may not get the education and training necessary to move into higher paying jobs that lift their families out of poverty. The challenge will be to help working parents acquire the skills they need to find better paying work while juggling the demands of work and family.

Summary of Findings

Additional Jobs with Lowest Basic Skills Needed to Employ the Welfare Recipients in Largest U.S. Counties
(Lowest basic skills = NALS level 1; ranked by need)

County	State	Largest City in County/Area	Percent Additional Jobs with Lowest Basic Skills Needed	Number of Additional Jobs with Lowest Basic Skills Needed
District of Columbia	DC	Washington, DC	27%	5,700
Sacramento	CA	Sacramento	21%	10,913
Essex	NJ	Newark	19%	7,085
Fresno	CA	Fresno	18%	7,755
Los Angeles	CA	Los Angeles	17%	77,616
San Bernardino	CA	San Bernardino	17%	13,691
	MD	Baltimore City	15%	6,911
Wayne	MI	Detroit	15%	16,914
San Diego	CA	San Diego	12%	14,817
Dade	FL	Miami	12%	12,888
Cook	IL	Chicago	12%	31,727
New York	NY	New York	12%	74,472
Alameda	CA	Fremont	11%	7,007
Cuyahoga	OH	Cleveland	11%	9,227
Riverside	CA	Riverside	10%	7,446
Monroe	NY	Rochester	10%	3,928
Fulton	GA	Atlanta	9%	3,328
Prince Georges	MD	Bowie	9%	2,318
Contra Costa	CA	Concord	8%	3,388
San Francisco	CA	San Francisco	8%	2,858
Erie	NY	Buffalo	8%	4,038
Westchester	NY	Yonkers	8%	2,844
Shelby	TN	Memphis	8%	4,344
Orange	CA	Anaheim	7%	9,378
Santa Clara	CA	San Jose	7%	5,585
Bexar	TX	San Antonio	7%	4,979
Milwaukee	WI	Milwaukee	7%	3,972
Jefferson	KY	Louisville	6%	2,279
Jackson	MO	Kansas City	6%	2,500
Franklin	OH	Columbus	6%	3,649
Ventura	CA	Oxnard	5%	2,007
Hillsborough	FL	Tampa	5%	2,680
Suffolk	MA	Boston	5%	1,465
Hennepin	MN	Minneapolis	5%	3,478
Hamilton	OH	Cincinnati	5%	2,938
King	WA	Seattle	5%	4,265
Pima	AZ	Tucson	4%	1,560
Broward	FL	Fort Lauderdale	4%	2,521
Duval	FL	Jacksonville	4%	1,580
Marion	IN	Indianapolis	4%	1,832
Baltimore	MD	Dundalk	4%	1,259
St. Louis	MO	St Louis	4%	1,998
Dallas	TX	Dallas	4%	4,501
Harris	TX	Houston	4%	6,861
Maricopa	AZ	Phoenix	3%	4,612
Orange	FL	Orlando	3%	1,690
Palm Beach	FL	W. Palm Beach	3%	1,500
Pinellas	FL	St Petersburg	3%	1,377
Honolulu	HI	Honolulu	3%	1,455
Macomb	MI	Warren	3%	1,163
Oakland	MI	Southfield	3%	1,758
Middlesex	NJ	New Brunswick	3%	1,169
Suffolk	NY	Lindenhurst	3%	2,102
Tarrant	TX	Arlington	3%	1,977
Jefferson	AL	Birmingham	2%	730
San Mateo	CA	Daly	2%	848
Essex	MA	Lynn	2%	654
Norfolk	MA	Quincy	2%	803

Worcester	MA	Worcester	2%	865
Montgomery	MD	Rockville	2%	512
Bergen	NJ	Hackensack	2%	693
Nassau	NY	Hempstead	2%	1,098
Salt Lake	UT	Salt Lake City	2%	785
Du Page	IL	Naperville	1%	427
Middlesex	MA	Lowell	1%	804
Fairfax	VA	Fairfax	1%	401

Introduction

In August 1996, President Clinton fulfilled a campaign pledge to "end welfare as we know it" by signing into law the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act. This law changed the fundamental nature of the welfare system. Before the law passed, families could receive cash benefits for an indefinite period of time. The 1996 law imposed time limits on the receipt of cash assistance to families with children. In order to underscore the new emphasis on self-sufficiency, the name of the program was changed from Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) to Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). With some exceptions, adults must be employed or be in an activity that will soon lead to work after receiving two years of TANF benefits. Federal funds cannot be used to support those who have been on TANF for more than five years in a lifetime.

This article evaluates the basic skills and employment prospects of current adult TANF recipients. We perform an analysis for the U.S. as a whole, as well as separate analyses for almost all of the 75 most populous U.S. counties plus the District of Columbia. (Seven large counties from Connecticut, Nevada and Pennsylvania were excluded due to data problems. See Appendix for details.) The remaining large counties contain 43 percent of the nation's welfare caseload.

We base our analyses on a measure of basic skills different than formal schooling; the measure comes from the National Adult Literacy Survey. The results for the U.S. as a whole show that typical TANF recipients have extremely low basic skills. Because of their low basic skills, the vast majority of jobs are not open to TANF mothers. The nation's economy would need to create 6 percent more low-skilled jobs to fully employ all welfare mothers.

Separate analyses by county show that the impact of welfare reform will vary greatly across the country. In some counties only one percent more low-skilled jobs are needed; in other counties the number of low-skilled jobs would have to increase by more than twenty percent. This means that some counties will witness fierce competition for unskilled jobs because of their large TANF caseloads and the particularly low basic skills of TANF recipients.

Five of the twelve counties that will potentially have the greatest difficulty moving their welfare recipients into jobs are in California, including the cities of Los Angeles and San Diego. The seven other counties that will be the hardest hit by welfare reform are those containing Washington, D.C.; Newark, New Jersey; Detroit, Michigan; Baltimore, Maryland; Chicago, Illinois; New York City; and Miami, Florida.

What is TANF?

TANF is a state-administered program that provides cash to poor families with children. Both state and federal funds support the program. One in 32 U.S. residents received TANF in June 1998. Some TANF funds support children in foster care. The rest of the TANF funds support families with at least one parent present; single mothers head the vast majority (91 percent) of families on TANF. Most TANF families are also beneficiaries of in-kind welfare programs, including Medicaid, Food Stamps, and/or public housing assistance. Before late 1996, the program was called Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC).

What skills do TANF recipients have?

We measure TANF recipients' basic skills using the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS). The survey, conducted in 1992, tested individuals' ability to apply math and reading skills to tasks common in daily life. The skills included reading comprehension, basic math skills, the ability to fill out forms, and the ability to read charts and graphs. The NALS then categorizes individuals into one of five literacy levels based on their performance on the test.

Individuals at the lowest level of literacy, level 1, are able to do very simple tasks such as locating the expiration date on a driver's license, totaling a bank deposit slip, or signing their names. They are unable to do level 2 tasks, such as locating an intersection on a street map, understanding an appliance warranty, filling out a government benefits application, or totaling the costs from an order. Individuals at literacy level 2 can perform these tasks, but cannot perform higher-order tasks such as writing a letter explaining an error on a credit card bill, using a bus schedule, or using a calculator to determine a 10 percent discount. See Appendix Table A for more details.

For the U.S. as a whole, most TANF recipients are at the lowest two levels of literacy: 35 percent are at level 1 and 41 percent are at level 2. These percentages are much higher than among adult women in general (combining those who do receive TANF with those who do not): 21 percent of adult women are at level 1 literacy, and 28 percent are at level 2. Mothers receiving TANF have fewer years of formal schooling than other women do, but the gap in basic skills between the two groups cannot be explained merely by their differences in formal education. For example, TANF recipients who were high school dropouts had significantly lower levels of basic skills than other female high school dropouts did: 88 percent of the high school dropouts on TANF had low basic skills, compared with 76 percent of the nonrecipient high school dropouts.

In each of the 66 most populous U.S. counties plus the District of Columbia (see Appendix for how the counties were selected), the majority of the welfare mothers have low basic skills. However, the basic skills of adult TANF recipients vary significantly among counties. In 1997, TANF mothers in Dade County, Florida (which includes Miami) had the lowest level of basic skills; 51 percent were at level 1 and 37 percent were at level 2. In Honolulu County, Hawaii, 18 percent were at level 1 and 44 percent were at level 2.

Despite the low levels of literacy documented by the NALS, it probably overestimates the literacy skills of current TANF recipients. Because of welfare reform, other social policy changes, and a booming labor market, many single mothers have left the welfare rolls and have found employment since the early 1990s. Between 1992 and 1998, the share of the US population that received TANF declined from 5.3 percent to 3.1 percent. The single mothers with the best literacy skills are those who are the most likely to have found jobs. Anecdotal evidence indicates that some employers use standardized tests to screen welfare recipients who apply for jobs, and hire only those recipients with adequate reading and math skills. Current TANF recipients, who have been unable to find work during the present economic recovery, likely have much lower basic skills than those recipients included in the 1992 NALS.

Our results for the U.S. as a whole are consistent with Olson and Pavetti (1996), who analyzed the basic skills of TANF recipients using the Armed Forces Qualifying Test (AFQT), a different measure of skills than the NALS. The military designed the AFQT to predict how well an individual would perform in various military jobs, and has long used the test to screen potential recruits. AFQT scores have proven to be good predictors of success in both military and civilian careers. Unlike the NALS test, the AFQT does not measure an individual's ability to apply math and reading skills to real-life situations. Rather, like many other standardized tests, the AFQT measures the test taker's ability to use math and reading skills in a typical academic context. Yet, despite the differences in the NALS and AFQT measures of basic skills, the results for the two measures, in terms of the percentage of the population with low basic skills, are quite similar.

Many TANF recipients will be unable to find full-time jobs

Because of the low literacy levels of TANF mothers, it is unrealistic to assume that they easily will find full-time, full-year jobs. There is a very large gap between the skills that most TANF recipients have and the skills that most employers require. Using the NALS we find that 76 percent of TANF recipients in the U.S. are at the lowest two levels of literacy. In contrast, almost two-thirds of all employed adults in the U.S. have literacy levels 3 and higher.

Even service sector jobs, reputed to be low skilled, often require more language and math skills than TANF recipients possess. Employers typically require their workers to speak and read English proficiently and to be able to do basic math. Much evidence suggests that these skills are becoming increasingly important in the labor market: Employers screen for basic skills when hiring for almost one-third of all jobs in the United States. Low skills make it hard to find a job and even harder to find one that pays well.

The importance of high literacy skills for U.S. jobs is shown in Appendix Table B. For each occupation category, the table shows the percentage of jobs requiring a particular literacy level. For example, 97.9 percent of all computer scientists have literacy levels of 3 or higher. Many jobs that pay relatively low wages also require relatively high levels of basic skills. Only 40.6 percent of sales-related jobs (e.g., retail/cashiers), 30.5 percent of information clerks (e.g., receptionists), and 20.2 percent of secretaries are at literacy levels 1 or 2.

The 1996 welfare reform law allows the states to exempt up to 20 percent of their welfare caseload from the work requirements. Assuming the states will take full advantage of this exemption, the U.S. economy will need 6 percent more level 1 jobs and 3 percent more level 2 jobs to fully employ all women on TANF. However, because most TANF recipients live in a small number of metropolitan areas, national statistics do not provide an accurate picture of the jobs available to the typical recipient. Some of the most populous counties in the U.S. will be more capable of fully absorbing unskilled TANF recipients into their labor markets than others. The results for all 66 counties, from which the figures in Tables 1, 2 and 3 derived, are reported in Table 4. Appendix Table C lists the largest city within each county.

Table 1 shows the 12 counties that have the highest ratios of TANF mothers at level 1 (level 2) literacy to level 1 (level 2) jobs. A relatively high number in the second column in Table 1 means that a county would need a relatively large number of level 1 jobs to fully employ all the welfare mothers at level 1 literacy. These and all other figures assume that the states will take full advantage of their ability to exempt 20 percent of the welfare caseload from the work requirements. Because counties have 5 years to move their welfare recipients into employment, the jobs could be created gradually over the next few years.

Of the 66 counties we analyze, Washington, D.C. will face the greatest difficulty meeting federal employment participation requirements for its unskilled TANF families; the economy of the nation's capital will need 27 percent more

level 1 jobs and 15 percent more level 2 jobs to fully employ all mothers currently receiving TANF. Of course, D.C. is a somewhat special case given its status as the nation's capital and large federal workforce, most of who do not live in the District. (See Appendix for a discussion of how the results would be affected by considering larger labor market areas for commuter cities like D.C.) But California will also be particularly hard hit by welfare reform. Five of the top twelve counties potentially facing the greatest problems meeting participation requirements are in California (Sacramento, Fresno, San Bernardino, Los Angeles, and San Diego).

Table 1
12 U.S. Counties That Have the Highest Need for Additional Level 1 and Level 2 Jobs (Ranked by Need for Level 1 Jobs)

County	Ratio of Mothers on TANF at Level 1 Literacy to Existing Level 1 Jobs	Ratio of Mothers on TANF at Level 2 Literacy to Existing Level 2 Jobs
Washington, D.C.	27%	15%
Sacramento, CA	21%	14%
Essex, NJ	19%	9%
Fresno, CA	18%	12%
San Bernardino, CA	17%	11%
Los Angeles, CA	17%	8%
Wayne, MI	15%	10%
Baltimore City, MD	15%	9%
Cook, IL	12%	7%
San Diego, CA	12%	6%
New York, NY	12%	5%
Dade, FL	12%	4%

Table 2 shows the 12 counties that will have the least difficulty meeting federally required participation rates for their TANF recipients. These counties also have very low welfare caseloads. TANF clients who may face the least difficulty finding a job live in three suburban counties: Middlesex County, Massachusetts, a suburb of Boston; Du Page County, Illinois, which is 15 miles from Chicago; and Fairfax County, Virginia, in suburban Washington, DC. Only 1 percent more level 1 and 1 percent more level 2 jobs will need to be created in each of these counties.

Table 2
12 U.S. Counties That Have the Lowest Need for Additional Level 1 and Level 2 Jobs (Ranked by Need for Level 1 Jobs)

County	Ratio of Mothers on TANF at Level 1 Literacy to Existing Level 1 Jobs	Ratio of Mothers on TANF at Level 2 Literacy to Existing Level 1 Jobs
Jefferson, AL	2%	1%
Bergen, NJ	2%	1%
Nassau, NY	2%	1%
Essex, MA	2%	1%
Norfolk, MA	2%	1%
Worcester, MA	2%	1%
Montgomery, MD	2%	1%
San Mateo, CA	2%	1%
Salt Lake, UT	2%	1%
Fairfax, VA	1%	1%
Du Page, IL	1%	1%
Middlesex, MA	1%	0.45%

Table 3 shows the percent more level 1 and level 2 jobs that need to be created in the 10 most populous counties in the United States, some of which also appear in Table 1. Many of these counties will need a substantial number of low skilled jobs to fully employ all mothers receiving TANF. However, three of the ten most populous counties (Harris County, Texas, which contains Houston; Dallas County, Texas; and Maricopa County, Arizona, which contains Phoenix) have relatively few unskilled mothers on TANF to absorb into their labor force.

Table 3
Ratio of Welfare Mothers at Level 1 and Level 2 Literacy
To Level 1 and Level 2 Jobs in 10 Most Populous U.S. Counties
(Ranked by population)

County	Ratio of Welfare Mothers at Level 1 Literacy to Existing Level 1 Jobs	Ratio of Welfare Mothers at Level 2 Literacy to Existing Level 2 Jobs	Percentage of National TANF Adult Recipient Caseload
Los Angeles, CA	17%	8%	6.96%
New York, NY	12%	5%	6.64%
Cook, IL	12%	7%	3.33%
Harris, TX	4%	2%	0.70%
San Diego, CA	12%	6%	1.53%
Orange, CA	7%	3%	0.91%
Maricopa, AZ	3%	2%	0.56%
Wayne, MI	15%	10%	1.89%
Dade, FL	12%	4%	0.96%
Dallas, TX	4%	2%	0.46%

The results for all 66 counties in Table 4 show that, even within the same state, there can be substantial variation in the ability of local labor markets to absorb unskilled TANF recipients. For example, while California has several counties that may experience difficulty in the wake of welfare reform (Sacramento, Fresno, San Bernardino, Los Angeles, San Diego), other counties in California should have relatively little problem moving aid recipients into unskilled jobs (Ventura, Santa Clara, Orange).

Improvements over time?

In constructing our data, we sought the most up-to-date county statistics for both series – welfare recipients and jobs. In some cases, one or both series were not available beyond the middle of 1997 (Florida and Minnesota). Thus, in order to permit a consistent comparison among counties, the month chosen for the analysis in Table 4 was set between June and November 1997 for every county, regardless of whether more recent data was available.

However, nationwide the TANF caseload for single parent families declined by 17 percent between early 1997 and early 1998. The decline in caseloads was accompanied by a rapid increase in employment among single mothers. To explore how this affects our results, Table 5 repeats the analysis using the latest data available for each county. (For Florida and Minnesota, because no later data was available, earlier data was used instead.)

For those counties where we have data for mid-1998, some significant changes are noticeable. For example, of the counties facing the greatest need for additional level 1 jobs in Table 1, one of the twelve had a large improvement:

- Washington, D.C.'s need for additional level 1 jobs fell from 27 percent of the total in June 1997 to 20 percent of the total in June 1998.

Three of the twelve counties had more moderate improvements:

- Essex County, New Jersey improved from 19 percent in June 1997 to 16 percent in July 1998.
- Wayne County, Michigan improved from 15 percent in June 1997 to 12 percent in June 1998.
- San Diego County, California improved from 12 percent in June 1997 to 9 percent in April 1998.

However, the situation in six of the twelve counties improved little or not at all:

- Sacramento County, California improved slightly from 21 percent in June 1997 to 20 percent in April 1998.
- Fresno County, California improved slightly from 18 percent in June 1997 to 17 percent in April 1998.
- San Bernardino County, California improved slightly from 17 percent in June 1997 to 15 percent in April 1998.
- Los Angeles County, California improved slightly from 17 percent in June 1997 to 15 percent in April 1998.
- Cook County, Illinois improved slightly from 12 percent in June 1997 to 10 percent in June 1998.
- Baltimore City, Maryland improved slightly from 15 percent in June 1997 to 14 percent in December 1997.

Unfortunately, two of the top twelve counties do not have data available late enough into 1998 to make the comparisons very meaningful. This applies equally to a number of other counties as well. For example, New York state,

including the combined five counties in New York City, showed no improvement between November 1997 and February 1998, but three months is not a long enough time period to judge whether the situation improved. (This was also true for the Dade County, Florida data.) Among the other counties, those with relatively low need for additional level 1 jobs had only slight improvements. But this is not surprising: it is hard to achieve substantial improvement when the original need was relatively low.

Policy implications for the literacy community

Welfare reform emphasizes a "work first" philosophy: recipients are encouraged to find a job – any job – no matter how little it pays. In counties where the need for additional low-skill jobs is high, such as those listed in Table 1, low-skill adults will have the greatest difficulty finding work. Current welfare recipients may need literacy training in order to find a private sector job in those counties. In counties where the need for additional low-skill jobs is small, such as those listed in Table 2, low-skill adults have the greatest likelihood of being employed. State welfare policies place little importance on learning new math and reading skills, so recipients may not get the training necessary to move into higher paying jobs that lift their families out of poverty. The challenge will be to help working parents acquire the skills they need to find better paying work while juggling the demands of work and family.

The need for improved basic skills among most current and former welfare recipients is acute, regardless of whether they are still on the welfare rolls. Even if we optimistically assume that all former TANF recipients could find full-time jobs, both our earlier study ("The Impact of Welfare Reform on AFDC Recipients in Los Angeles County") and ongoing research (not reported) predict that many former recipients would still earn incomes at or below the poverty line because of their low basic skills.

Table 4: Literacy and Job Statistics for Each County

County	State	Number of TANF Adult Recipients	% of TANF Recipients at Level 1 Literacy	% of TANF Recipients at Level 2 Literacy	Number of Jobs	% of Jobs at Level 1 Literacy	% of Jobs at Level 2 Literacy	(.8) Ratio of TANF Recipients at Level 1 Literacy to Level 1 Jobs	(.8) Ratio of TANF Recipients at Level 2 Literacy to Level 2 Jobs	County Recipients as a % of Total U.S. TANF Recipients	Month
Jefferson	AL	2,637	35%	46%	332,540	10%	23%	2%	1%	0.08%	Oct-97
Pima	AZ	6,847	28%	44%	349,400	11%	22%	4%	3%	0.21%	Oct-97
Maricopa	AZ	18,344	31%	43%	1,358,400	10%	22%	3%	2%	0.56%	Oct-97
San Mateo	CA	3,129	34%	45%	374,900	9%	21%	2%	1%	0.09%	Jun-97
Fresno	CA	27,524	35%	42%	332,100	13%	23%	18%	12%	0.83%	Jun-97
Ventura	CA	7,301	34%	45%	359,300	11%	22%	5%	3%	0.22%	Jun-97
San Francisco	CA	9,819	36%	44%	394,300	9%	21%	8%	4%	0.30%	Jun-97
Contra Costa	CA	12,978	33%	46%	452,100	9%	21%	8%	5%	0.39%	Jun-97
Sacramento	CA	43,919	31%	45%	524,300	10%	22%	21%	14%	1.33%	Jun-97
Riverside	CA	27,279	34%	44%	595,400	12%	24%	10%	7%	0.83%	Jun-97
Alameda	CA	28,673	31%	46%	670,800	9%	21%	11%	7%	0.87%	Jun-97
San Bernardino	CA	49,407	35%	44%	671,100	12%	23%	17%	11%	1.50%	Jun-97
Santa Clara	CA	20,299	34%	42%	908,700	9%	21%	7%	4%	0.62%	Jun-97
Orange	CA	30,185	39%	41%	1,334,600	10%	21%	7%	3%	0.91%	Jun-97
San Diego	CA	50,457	37%	42%	1,227,100	10%	22%	12%	6%	1.53%	Jun-97
Los Angeles	CA	229,484	42%	40%	4,149,200	11%	23%	17%	8%	6.96%	Jun-97
Duval	FL	5,661	35%	47%	414,749	10%	23%	4%	2%	0.17%	Jun-97
Orange	FL	5,370	39%	43%	541,803	11%	23%	3%	1%	0.16%	Jun-97
Hillsborough	FL	8,464	40%	44%	525,846	11%	22%	5%	3%	0.26%	Jun-97
Pinellas	FL	4,774	36%	46%	393,083	10%	22%	3%	2%	0.14%	Jun-97
Palm Beach	FL	4,553	41%	44%	427,513	11%	22%	3%	2%	0.14%	Jun-97
Broward	FL	7,875	40%	45%	607,589	10%	22%	4%	2%	0.24%	Jun-97
Dade	FL	31,836	51%	37%	941,152	11%	23%	12%	4%	0.96%	Jun-97
Fulton	GA	12,035	35%	47%	377,552	10%	21%	9%	6%	0.36%	Jun-97
Honolulu	HI	10,081	18%	44%	403,250	10%	22%	3%	4%	0.31%	Oct-97
Du Page	IL	1,852	29%	44%	497,150	8%	20%	1%	1%	0.06%	Jun-97
Cook	IL	109,865	36%	45%	2,519,652	10%	22%	12%	7%	3.33%	Jun-97
Marion	IN	5,884	39%	45%	447,640	11%	22%	4%	2%	0.18%	Jun-97
Jefferson	KY	7,611	37%	45%	364,010	11%	23%	6%	3%	0.23%	Oct-97
Norfolk	MA	2,478	41%	42%	352,702	10%	22%	2%	1%	0.08%	Jun-97
Suffolk	MA	4,377	42%	42%	330,126	8%	20%	5%	2%	0.13%	Jun-97
Essex	MA	2,590	32%	47%	349,338	10%	22%	2%	1%	0.08%	Jun-97
Worcester	MA	2,628	41%	41%	356,935	10%	22%	2%	1%	0.08%	Jun-97
Middlesex	MA	2,387	42%	41%	790,929	11%	22%	1%	<1%	0.07%	Jun-97

Table 4: Literacy and Job Statistics for Each County (continued)

County	State	Number of TANF Adult Recipients	% of TANF Recipients at Level 1 Literacy	% of TANF Recipients at Level 2 Literacy	Number of Jobs	% of Jobs at Level 1 Literacy	% of Jobs at Level 2 Literacy	(.8) Ratio of TANF Recipients at Level 1 Literacy to Level 1 Jobs	(.8) Ratio of TANF Recipients at Level 2 Literacy to Level 2 Jobs	County Recipients as a % of Total U.S. TANF Recipients	Month
Baltimore	MD	4,129	38%	45%	344,666	9%	21%	4%	2%	0.13%	Jun-97
Prince Georges	MD	8,030	36%	45%	292,469	9%	21%	9%	5%	0.24%	Jun-97
Baltimore City	MD	23,262	37%	46%	384,624	12%	24%	15%	9%	0.71%	Jun-97
Montgomery	MD	2,026	32%	44%	405,635	7%	18%	2%	1%	0.06%	Jun-97
Macomb	MI	4,019	36%	46%	417,800	11%	23%	3%	2%	0.12%	Jun-97
Oakland	MI	6,938	32%	47%	646,625	9%	21%	3%	2%	0.21%	Jun-97
Wayne	MI	62,492	34%	46%	924,175	12%	24%	15%	10%	1.89%	Jun-97
Hennepin	MN	14,671	30%	47%	831,253	9%	21%	5%	3%	0.44%	Jun-97
Jackson	MO	8,325	38%	46%	354,131	11%	23%	6%	4%	0.25%	Oct-97
St. Louis	MO	6,900	36%	46%	552,042	10%	22%	4%	2%	0.21%	Oct-97
Middlesex	NJ	3,573	41%	42%	392,800	9%	21%	3%	1%	0.11%	Jun-97
Essex	NJ	21,329	42%	42%	353,800	11%	22%	19%	9%	0.65%	Jun-97
Bergen	NJ	2,175	40%	43%	429,800	8%	20%	2%	1%	0.07%	Jun-97
Monroe	NY	12,881	38%	44%	373,600	11%	22%	10%	6%	0.39%	Nov-97
Westchester	NY	9,007	39%	41%	431,100	8%	20%	8%	3%	0.27%	Nov-97
Erie	NY	15,027	34%	46%	446,700	11%	23%	8%	5%	0.46%	Nov-97
Nassau	NY	4,036	34%	47%	671,400	8%	20%	2%	1%	0.12%	Nov-97
Suffolk	NY	6,773	39%	44%	681,700	10%	22%	3%	2%	0.21%	Nov-97
New York	NY	219,038	42%	39%	6,133,500	10%	22%	12%	5%	6.64%	Nov-97
Hamilton	OH	10,108	36%	46%	557,229	10%	22%	5%	3%	0.31%	Jun-97
Franklin	OH	12,658	36%	45%	641,157	10%	21%	6%	3%	0.38%	Jun-97
Cuyahoga	OH	31,786	36%	46%	786,055	10%	22%	11%	7%	0.96%	Jun-97
Shelby	TN	15,571	35%	47%	523,300	11%	23%	8%	5%	0.47%	Oct-97
Tarrant	TX	6,928	36%	45%	747,172	10%	22%	3%	1%	0.21%	Jun-97
Bexar	TX	14,294	44%	37%	664,307	11%	23%	7%	3%	0.43%	Jun-97
Dallas	TX	15,211	37%	45%	1,207,687	10%	22%	4%	2%	0.46%	Jun-97
Harris	TX	23,004	37%	45%	1,736,037	10%	22%	4%	2%	0.70%	Jun-97
Salt Lake	UT	3,292	30%	48%	463,500	10%	22%	2%	1%	0.10%	Oct-97
Fairfax	VA	1,451	35%	45%	459,928	7%	18%	1%	1%	0.04%	Jun-97
King	WA	18,193	29%	47%	996,100	9%	21%	5%	3%	0.55%	Sep-97
Milwaukee	WI	14,502	34%	46%	472,629	11%	23%	7%	5%	0.44%	Oct-97
Washington	DC	18,859	38%	47%	236,600	9%	20%	27%	15%	0.57%	Jun-97

Table 5: Changes Over Time

County	State	Number of TANF Adult Recipients	Month	(.8) Ratio of TANF Recipients at Level 1 Literacy to Level 1 Jobs	(.8) Ratio of TANF Recipients at Level 2 Literacy to Level 2 Jobs	Number of TANF Adult Recipients	Month	(.8) Ratio of TANF Recipients at Level 1 Literacy to Level 1 Jobs	(.8) Ratio of TANF Recipients at Level 2 Literacy to Level 2 Jobs
Jefferson	AL	2,637	Oct-97	2%	1%	2,093	Jun-98	2%	1%
Pima	AZ	6,847	Oct-97	4%	3%	5,017	Jun-98	3%	2%
Maricopa	AZ	18,344	Oct-97	3%	2%	11,302	Jun-98	2%	1%
San Mateo	CA	3,129	Jun-97	2%	1%	2,137	Apr-98	2%	1%
Fresno	CA	27,524	Jun-97	18%	12%	25,285	Apr-98	17%	11%
Ventura	CA	7,301	Jun-97	5%	3%	6,244	Apr-98	4%	3%
San Francisco	CA	9,819	Jun-97	8%	4%	8,408	Apr-98	7%	4%
Contra Costa	CA	12,978	Jun-97	8%	5%	11,829	Apr-98	8%	5%
Sacramento	CA	43,919	Jun-97	21%	14%	41,180	Apr-98	20%	13%
Riverside	CA	27,279	Jun-97	10%	7%	22,455	Apr-98	8%	5%
Alameda	CA	28,673	Jun-97	11%	7%	25,868	Apr-98	10%	7%
San Bernardino	CA	49,407	Jun-97	17%	11%	42,517	Apr-98	15%	9%
Santa Clara	CA	20,299	Jun-97	7%	4%	15,159	Apr-98	5%	3%
Orange	CA	30,185	Jun-97	7%	3%	23,469	Apr-98	5%	3%
San Diego	CA	50,457	Jun-97	12%	6%	40,668	Apr-98	9%	5%
Los Angeles	CA	229,484	Jun-97	17%	8%	204,534	Apr-98	15%	7%
Duval	FL	6,888	Mar-97	5%	3%	5,661	Jun-97	4%	2%
Orange	FL	6,193	Mar-97	3%	2%	5,370	Jun-97	3%	1%
Hillsborough	FL	9,587	Mar-97	5%	3%	8,464	Jun-97	5%	3%
Pinellas	FL	5,625	Mar-97	4%	2%	4,774	Jun-97	3%	2%
Palm Beach	FL	5,227	Mar-97	4%	2%	4,553	Jun-97	3%	2%
Broward	FL	8,818	Mar-97	4%	2%	7,875	Jun-97	4%	2%
Dade	FL	32,036	Mar-97	12%	4%	31,836	Jun-97	12%	4%
Fulton	GA	12,035	Jun-97	9%	6%	9,083	Jun-98	7%	4%
Honolulu	HI	10,081	Oct-97	3%	4%	9,084	Jul-98	3%	3%
Du Page	IL	1,852	Jun-97	1%	1%	1,411	Jun-98	1%	1%
Cook	IL	109,865	Jun-97	12%	7%	93,947	Jun-98	10%	6%
Marion	IN	5,884	Jun-97	4%	2%	4,095	Jun-98	3%	1%
Jefferson	KY	7,611	Oct-97	6%	3%	6,808	May-98	5%	3%
Norfolk	MA	2,478	Jun-97	2%	1%	2,515	Jul-98	2%	1%
Suffolk	MA	4,377	Jun-97	5%	2%	3,514	Jul-98	4%	2%
Essex	MA	2,590	Jun-97	2%	1%	2,086	Jul-98	2%	1%
Worcester	MA	2,628	Jun-97	2%	1%	2,177	Jul-98	2%	1%

Table 5: Changes Over Time (continued)

County	State	Number of TANF Adult Recipients	Month	(.8) Ratio of TANF Recipients at Level 1 Literacy to Level 1 Jobs	(.8) Ratio of TANF Recipients at Level 2 Literacy to Level 2 Jobs	Number of TANF Adult Recipients	Month	(.8) Ratio of TANF Recipients at Level 1 Literacy to Level 1 Jobs	(.8) Ratio of TANF Recipients at Level 2 Literacy to Level 2 Jobs
Middlesex	MA	2,387	Jun-97	1%	0%	1,810	Jul-98	1%	0%
Baltimore	MD	4,129	Jun-97	4%	2%	3,629	Dec-97	3%	2%
Prince Georges	MD	8,030	Jun-97	9%	5%	6,717	Dec-97	7%	4%
Baltimore City	MD	23,262	Jun-97	15%	9%	22,349	Dec-97	14%	9%
Montgomery	MD	2,026	Jun-97	2%	1%	1,763	Dec-97	2%	1%
Macomb	MI	4,019	Jun-97	3%	2%	2,756	Jun-98	2%	1%
Oakland	MI	6,938	Jun-97	3%	2%	4,875	Jun-98	2%	1%
Wayne	MI	62,492	Jun-97	15%	10%	48,758	Jun-98	12%	8%
Hennepin	MN	14,671	Jun-97	5%	3%	14,128	Sep-97	5%	3%
Jackson	MO	8,325	Oct-97	6%	4%	6,153	Jun-98	5%	3%
St. Louis	MO	6,900	Oct-97	4%	2%	5,728	Jun-98	3%	2%
Middlesex	NJ	3,573	Jun-97	3%	1%	2,079	Jul-98	2%	1%
Essex	NJ	21,329	Jun-97	19%	9%	18,463	Jul-98	16%	7%
Bergen	NJ	2,175	Jun-97	2%	1%	1,364	Jul-98	1%	1%
Monroe	NY	12,881	Nov-97	10%	6%	12,799	Feb-98	10%	6%
Westchester	NY	9,007	Nov-97	8%	3%	8,919	Feb-98	8%	3%
Erie	NY	15,027	Nov-97	8%	5%	15,034	Feb-98	8%	5%
Nassau	NY	4,036	Nov-97	2%	1%	3,909	Feb-98	2%	1%
Suffolk	NY	6,773	Nov-97	3%	2%	6,627	Feb-98	3%	2%
New York	NY	219,038	Nov-97	12%	5%	210,168	Feb-98	12%	5%
Hamilton	OH	10,108	Jun-97	5%	3%	7,118	Mar-98	4%	2%
Franklin	OH	12,658	Jun-97	6%	3%	10,308	Mar-98	5%	3%
Cuyahoga	OH	31,786	Jun-97	11%	7%	27,080	Mar-98	10%	6%
Shelby	TN	15,571	Oct-97	8%	5%	14,735	May-98	7%	5%
Tarrant	TX	6,928	Jun-97	3%	1%	2,724	Jul-98	1%	1%
Bexar	TX	14,294	Jun-97	7%	3%	10,674	Jul-98	5%	2%
Dallas	TX	15,211	Jun-97	4%	2%	10,118	Jul-98	2%	1%
Harris	TX	23,004	Jun-97	4%	2%	14,106	Jul-98	2%	1%
Salt Lake	UT	3,292	Oct-97	2%	1%	3,191	Jul-98	1%	1%
Fairfax	VA	1,451	Jun-97	1%	1%	1,088	Jun-98	1%	0%
King	WA	18,193	Sep-97	5%	3%	15,524	May-98	4%	3%
Milwaukee	WI	14,502	Oct-97	7%	5%	13,434	Jun-98	7%	4%
Washington	DC	18,859	Jun-97	27%	15%	15,046	Jul-98	20%	11%

Appendix

Limitations of this study

The estimates of the percentage of additional low-skilled jobs needed to fully employ all TANF mothers are based on two representative samples of the population. Therefore, the estimates are not created with absolute precision; the estimate of the percentage of additional low-skilled jobs represents the middle of a range of probable values. The actual percentage could be a few points lower or higher than our estimate. Therefore, some differences between counties in the percentage of additional low-skill jobs needed are not statistically meaningful.

For example, Table 1 shows that Essex County, New Jersey will need 19 percent more level 1 jobs, and Fresno County, California will need 18 percent more level 1 jobs. That difference is not statistically meaningful; it is fairly likely that Fresno County could actually need a slightly higher percentage of additional jobs than Essex County. However, we do have more confidence that Essex County needs a higher percentage of additional low-skill jobs than Cook County, Illinois, because the difference between the Essex County and Cook County is much larger than the difference between Essex County and Fresno County (Cook County would need 12 percent additional level 1 jobs).

We use counties as a close approximation to local labor markets because TANF caseload data are available only at the county level; county governments administer the program. An alternative labor market definition is Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), which are typically agglomerations of several counties, but can overlap county boundaries. A shortcoming of using a county, rather than an MSA, as a labor market definition is that many workers commute to jobs within their MSA but in a different county. But for poor single mothers, the county may be a more appropriate definition of a labor market. More than one-third (36 percent) of low-income, single parent households do not have a car; and the percentage is likely much higher among welfare recipients. Because of the dispersed urban structure of most MSAs, public transportation often does not transport people from one county to another; when such a trip is possible it can take more than an hour.

The largest counties

Of the 75 largest counties in the United States, the three from Pennsylvania (Montgomery, Philadelphia, Allegheny) were excluded because comparable monthly data on employment and the TANF caseload were not available. The three from Connecticut (Fairfield, Hartford, New Haven) and one from Nevada (Clark) were excluded because labor market data were not available

by county. For purposes of analyzing a complete local labor market, we combined the counties of New York, Kings, Queens, Bronx and Richmond, which cover the five boroughs of New York City (Manhattan, the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island), four of which are in the top 75 largest counties. Adding the District of Columbia yields a total number of 66 largest counties (including D.C.) that we analyze. Note that both the District of Columbia and Baltimore City are municipalities not contained within a county.

Our previous report ("The Impact of Welfare Reform on AFDC Recipients in Los Angeles County") reached the same basic conclusions for Los Angeles County, but the actual numbers reported there differ from those reported here for the following reasons: (a) this report uses data for 1997 and 1998 where the earlier report used 1996 data, and (b) the earlier report did not account for the 20 percent caseload exemption.

As noted above, the decision to analyze counties as opposed to local labor market areas such as MSAs has a disproportionate effect on the results for some of the "commuter cities" included as separate areas in the analysis, e.g. Washington, DC. If these cities were combined with the surrounding suburbs, e.g. Fairfax County, VA, which typically face more favorable ratios of low-skill welfare recipients to low-skill jobs, the overall picture for the combined labor market area would look better. However, we did not do this because welfare statistics are reported at the county level and the overlap of counties and MSAs is rarely uniform. This makes the construction of accurate MSA-level welfare statistics quite difficult. As noted above, for poor single mothers without an automobile, the county may be a more appropriate definition of a labor market.

Literacy estimates

We estimate the literacy level of TANF recipients in the 75 most populous counties and the District of Columbia using data from the 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) and the Public Use Microdata Sample of 1990 U.S. Census of Population and Housing. The federal government conducted the NALS to document the literacy levels of the adult population of the United States. The survey was administered to a representative sample of 26,091 adults.

The survey included two sections. The first section – a background questionnaire – gathered demographic information, employment information, and information about the receipt of public benefits. The second part of the NALS survey was a short test designed to measure literacy. Only individuals who could read English took the literacy test. Each individual received a score on the NALS from 1 to 5, 1 being the lowest level of literacy, 5 being the highest. Appendix

Table A describes the interpretation of the lowest two literacy levels. Individuals received an overall score, but also received a subscore in three areas: prose (reading), document (ability to read charts and graphs), and mathematics (the ability to apply math to a real world context).

Our methodology is as follows. We cannot directly calculate the average literacy level of TANF recipients in a county because the NALS lacks sufficiently detailed information on the geographic area in which a person lives, and because the NALS has a relatively small sample size. Instead, we predict literacy for TANF recipients in each county based on their demographic characteristics. Using the NALS, we estimate an ordered probit model for the entire United States that predicts literacy levels of TANF recipients based on their demographic characteristics. The regression coefficients are reported in Levenson, Reardon and Schmidt (1998). Then we predict literacy levels for all welfare recipients in each county in the 1990 Census using the estimates from the ordered probit model.

We cannot directly observe in either the Census or NALS whether a person was on TANF. (When the Census and NALS surveys were conducted, the program was called AFDC, not TANF.) The surveys ask more general questions about all forms of public assistance. For the Census, we assume unmarried women with children who are receiving public assistance are on TANF. For the NALS, we assume unmarried women in households with two or more people are on TANF if someone in the house receives public assistance and the woman does not report a disability.

We limit TANF-eligible status to able-bodied people in order to exclude people who could turn to SSI when their TANF benefits are cut off. To do this, we exclude anyone in the Census who reports a work-preventing disability. We exclude from the NALS sample anyone who lives in a household where someone receives SSI and who reports a disability of any sort. The latter account for a very small fraction of TANF-eligible people in the NALS. Sensitivity analysis showed that including them in the calculations makes no difference for our conclusions.

The number of low-skilled jobs

We cannot directly calculate the skill levels of jobs in each county because the NALS lacks sufficiently detailed information on the geographic area in which a person lives, and because the NALS has a relatively small sample size. Using the NALS, we estimate the share of U.S. workers in each occupation that are at level 1 and level 2 literacy. We assume the percentage of workers in each occupation who are at level 1 or level 2 literacy is the same for each county as for

the U.S. as a whole. We then multiply the level 1 and 2 literacy occupation percentages from the NALS with counts of the number of jobs in each county-occupation group from the 1990 Census. This yields the number of jobs in each occupation that are at level 1 and at level 2 literacy. This procedure implicitly assumes that the occupational distribution within each county stayed the same between 1989 and 1996. We performed these calculations for both 2-digit and 3-digit occupation categories and found virtually identical results.

We calculate the total number of literacy level 1 and level 2 jobs in each county (across all occupations) as follows. We calculate the share of each county's workers who are at literacy levels 1 and 2 using the same technique as above for the within-occupation calculations. We then take the share of all the county's workers at literacy levels 1 and 2 and multiply that number by the size of the county's labor force for the relevant month that coincides with the most recent reporting period for the TANF adult caseload.

Low-skilled TANF recipients as a share of low-skilled jobs

We used a variety of data sources to predict how many level 1 and level 2 jobs each county's labor market would need to create to employ all low-skilled TANF recipients. First, using the methodology explained above, we estimated the number of TANF recipients in each county who are at level 1 and level 2 literacy. We multiplied the percent of TANF recipients at level 1 and level 2 literacy by the total number of TANF adult recipients in each county.

For example, we estimated that 42 percent of Los Angeles County's TANF adult recipients were at level 1 literacy, and 40 percent were at level 2 literacy. In June 1997 a total of 229,484 adults headed TANF families in Los Angeles County. Therefore, we estimate that 97,021 (229,484 x .42) TANF recipients are at level 1 literacy, and 90,948 (229,484 x .42) recipients are at level 2 literacy.

Using the methodology explained above, we estimated the number of level 1 and level 2 workers in each county. To estimate how much the level 1 labor market would have to grow to employ all level 1 TANF recipients, we took 80 percent of the ratio of the number of TANF recipients at level 1 literacy to the number of level 1 jobs. We did the same calculation for level 2 jobs. Again taking the Los Angeles County example, we estimated 11 percent of the jobs are at literacy level 1 and 23 percent are at level 2. Of the 4,149,200 jobs in the county in June 1997, this translates into 461,391 level 1 jobs and 942,698 level 2 jobs. Taking the ratios of recipients to jobs yields a need of 17 percent more level

1 jobs ((.8)*(97,021) ÷ 461,391) and 8 percent more level 2 jobs ((.8)* (90,948) ÷ 942,698).

Appendix Table A: Definitions of Literacy Levels in the National Adult Literacy Survey		
Literacy Level	Technical Requirements	Examples
Level 1	• Extracting a single piece of information from a relatively short text or document • Entering personal information on a document • Performing specified single arithmetic operations	• Signing your name • Locating the expiration date on a driver's license • Totaling a bank deposit entry
Level 2	• Matching, integrating and contrasting information when minor distractors[1] are present • Making low-level inferences • Performing single arithmetic operations where the operation and numbers to be used are stated or easily determined	• Interpreting instructions from an appliance warranty • Locating an intersection on a street map • Calculating the total costs of a purchase from an order form
Level 3	• Locating and/or integrating information from a lengthy text or from one or more documents where irrelevant information and distracters may be present • Interpreting graphs and schedules • Performing arithmetic operations which must be determined from the terms used in the directive, and which require using numbers that must be found in the material	• Using a bus schedule to determine the appropriate bus for a given set of conditions • Using a calculator to find the difference between regular and sale price from an advertisement • Using a calculator to determine the discount from an oil bill if paid within 10 days
Level 4	• Making multiple-feature matches and integrating or synthesizing information in complex or lengthy passages • Making high-level inferences and considering conditional information • Performing tasks that require numerous responses • Performing two or more sequential mathematical operations where the operations to be used must be inferred or drawn from prior knowledge	• Determining the correct change using information in a menu • Using an eligibility pamphlet, calculating the yearly amount a couple would receive for basic supplemental security income • Explaining the difference between two different types of employee benefits
Level 5	• Searching for and/or contrasting complex information drawn from dense text • Searching through complex displays that contain multiple distracters • Making high-level, text-based inferences • Using background or specialized knowledge to interpret information or determine the features of a multiple-operation mathematical problem	• Determining shipping and totaling costs on an order form for items in a catalog • Using a calculator to determine the total cost of carpet to cover a room • Interpreting a brief phrase from a lengthy news article

[1] A distracter is a plausible but incorrect piece of information.

Source: *Adult Literacy in America*. U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement. September 1993.

Appendix Table B: The Literacy Requirements of U.S. Jobs
By Percentage of Workers in an Occupation at Levels 1, 2 and 3+

	Percentage of occupation at level:		
2-digit Census Occupation Categories	% Level 1	% Level 2	% Level 3+
Miscellaneous farming/fishing/hunting (e.g. gardeners)	38.5	24.5	37.0
Cleaning equipment handler/laborers (e.g. construction laborers)	30.6	32.3	37.1
Health services (e.g. nursing aids)	28.3	36.4	35.3
Miscellaneous assembler/operator/fabricator (e.g. textile workers)	28.1	32.9	39.0
Miscellaneous services (e.g. cooks, maids, janitors)	23.9	32.2	43.9
Fabricator/assembler/inspector (e.g. welder, painters, graders & sorters)	25.2	35.8	39.0
Transport operative (e.g. truck drivers, bus drivers)	22.0	35.0	42.9
Construction crafts (e.g. carpenters, electricians)	19.0	29.8	51.2
Miscellaneous crafts (e.g. mechanics, butchers)	14.5	28.7	56.8
Manager/operators in agriculture	14.2	34.4	51.4
Personal service occupations (e.g. hairdressers, child care workers)	13.3	32.3	54.5
Miscellaneous sales related (e.g. retail sales, cashiers)	11.1	29.5	59.4
Computer equipment operators	7.3	26.5	66.1
Public sector management (e.g. principals, public administrators)	7.2	12.3	80.5
Sales supervisors	5.9	24.2	69.9
Stenographers/typists	4.9	32.6	62.5
Misc. administrative support (e.g. bookkeepers, office and stock clerks)	4.8	23.8	71.3
Public safety (e.g. police, fire, security)	3.7	17.6	78.6
Supervisors	3.4	17.3	79.3
Science technicians	3.2	27.0	69.9
Adjustors and investigators (e.g. insurance and collection)	3.2	14.6	82.2
Miscellaneous professionals (e.g. social workers, lawyers)	2.9	10.0	87.1
Information clerks (e.g. receptionists)	2.7	27.8	69.5
Private sector management	2.6	14.1	83.3
Engineering technicians (e.g. drafting occupations)	2.5	20.1	77.5
Secretaries	2.1	19.1	78.8
Health technicians (e.g. lab technicians)	1.8	28.2	70.0
Military	1.6	15.1	83.3
Registered nurses	1.5	9.5	89.0
Misc. management (e.g. financial officers, management analysts)	1.4	10.9	87.8
Teachers (e.g. university, elementary, secondary)	1.4	8.7	89.9
Engineers	1.4	8.2	90.4
Sales representatives (e.g. commercial sales, advertising executives)	1.1	12.3	86.6
Natural scientists	0.5	3.4	96.2
Math/computer scientists	0.5	1.6	97.9
Misc. technicians (e.g. computer programmers, legal assistants)	0.4	13.2	86.4
Health diagnostics (e.g. physicians, dentists, veterinarians)	0.0	5.5	94.5
Architects/surveyors	0.0	3.6	96.4
Accountants/auditors	0.0	3.0	97.0
Miscellaneous health related (e.g. pharmacists, therapists)	0.0	2.8	97.2

Note: The columns add across to 100%. For example, 38.5% of farm jobs require level 1 literacy, 24.5% require level 2, and the other 37% require level 3 or more.

Appendix Table C: Largest City in Each County/Area

County/Area	Largest City in County/Area	City Population, 1990 Census
Jefferson, AL	Birmingham	265,196
Pima, AZ	Tucson	405,390
Maricopa, AZ	Phoenix	983,403
San Mateo, CA	Daly	92,311
Fresno, CA	Fresno	354,202
Ventura, CA	Oxnard	142,216
San Francisco, CA	San Francisco	723,959
Contra Costa, CA	Concord	111,348
Sacramento, CA	Sacramento	369,365
Riverside, CA	Riverside	226505
Alameda, CA	Fremont	173,339
San Bernardino, CA	San Bernardino	164,164
Santa Clara, CA	San Jose	782,248
Orange, CA	Anaheim	266,406
San Diego, CA	San Diego	1,110,549
Los Angeles, CA	Los Angeles	3,485,398
Duval, FL	Jacksonville	635,230
Orange, FL	Orlando	164,693
Hillsborough, FL	Tampa	280,015
Pinellas, FL	St Petersburg	238,629
Palm Beach, FL	W. Palm Beach	67,643
Broward, FL	Fort Lauderdale	149,377
Dade, FL	Miami	358,548
Fulton, GA	Atlanta	394,017
Honolulu, HI	Honolulu CDP	365,272
Du Page, IL	Naperville	85,351
Cook, IL	Chicago	2,783,726
Marion, IN	Indianapolis	731,327
Jefferson, KY	Louisville	369,063
Norfolk, MA	Quincy	84,985
Suffolk, MA	Boston	574,283
Essex, MA	Lynn	81,245
Worcester, MA	Worcester	169,759
Middlesex, MA	Lowell	103,439
Baltimore, MD	Dundalk	65,800
	Baltimore City, MD	736,014
Prince Georges, MD	Bowie	37,589
Montgomery, MD	Rockville	44,835
Macomb, MI	Warren	144,864
Oakland, MI	Southfield	75,728
Wayne, MI	Detroit	1,027,974
Hennepin, MN	Minneapolis	368,383
Jackson, MO	Kansas City	341,179
St. Louis, MO	St Louis	396,685

Appendix Table C: Largest City in Each County/Area (continued)

County/Area	Largest City in County/Area	City Population, 1990 Census
Middlesex, NJ	New Brunswick	41,711
Essex, NJ	Newark	275,221
Bergen, NJ	Hackensack	37,049
Monroe, NY	Rochester	231,636
Westchester, NY	Yonkers	188,082
Erie, NY	Buffalo	328,123
Nassau, NY	Hempstead	49,453
Suffolk, NY	Lindenhurst	26,879
New York, NY	New York	7,322,564
Hamilton, OH	Cincinnati	364,040
Franklin, OH	Columbus	632,270
Cuyahoga, OH	Cleveland	505,616
Shelby, TN	Memphis	610,337
Tarrant, TX	Arlington	261,721
Bexar, TX	San Antonio	935,933
Dallas, TX	Dallas	966,168
Harris, TX	Houston	1,603,524
Salt Lake, UT	Salt Lake City	159,936
Fairfax, VA	Fairfax	19,894
King, WA	Seattle	516,259
Milwaukee, WI	Milwaukee	628,088
	District of Columbia	606,900

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FAMILIES FIRST: IMPLICATIONS OF WELFARE REFORM FOR TENNESSEE ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

> *The sixty (60) month time limit and the eighteen (18) month time limit stated in subdivision (d) (1) shall not begin to run to a person who functions at or below grade level 8.9 as determined by testing certified by the Department of Education for adult basic education purposes, so long as such person is enrolled at least twenty (20) hours per week in a departmentally approved G.E.D. program and is making satisfactory progress as judged by the teacher and the department's case manager, until a person has obtained and functions at a level greater than a grade level above 8.9 as determined by testing certified by the Department of Education for adult basic education purposes. Senate Bill No. 3151 Section 5 (d)(4)*

With these words, Tennessee's welfare reform program diverged from national trends and actively encouraged adult basic education. In many ways the *Families First* program, as welfare reform is called in Tennessee, parallels the national law. But for participants who score below 8.9 on the TABE (Tests of Adult Basic Education) the clock does not start ticking. In order to continue receiving benefits, they are not required to immediately look for work and instead must spend twenty hours a week in adult basic education classes until their TABE score reaches 8.9.

The Center for Literacy Studies (CLS), a not-for-profit organization, has been involved in *Families First* in several ways. CLS staff worked with local community organizations to develop educational materials about the *Families First* program. We worked with the Tennessee Department of Adult and Community Education to train *Families First* teachers. We continue to support these teachers in a variety of ways.

This paper describes the Tennessee experience with *Families First*, from policy to program implementation, with particular focus on the impact of policies and practice on adult basic education. For this paper we have talked to policy makers involved in developing *Families First*. Interviews were conducted with key players in 1998 and quotes from those interviews are presented throughout the paper. We have drawn on ongoing work with 200 *Families First* teachers, and we have had informal conversations with students in *Families First* classes. We present here the program design, the legislative process, and the implementation of *Families First* as described by those involved in this ongoing policy experiment. We discuss the impacts of *Families First* on adult basic education

practitioners, and we share the observations of students in *Families First* classes. Finally, we offer some closing observations and questions.

The Road to *Families First*

Policy makers reflect on the development of *Families First*

This section of the paper examines the inclusion of adult education in Tennessee's version of welfare reform, *Families First*, as it journeyed from concept to design, to legislation, to federal waiver, and finally to implementation. Tennessee Governor Don Sundquist's campaign promise to make systemic changes in welfare became law—a law that would change the way the state helps poor families. On May 15, 1996, Governor Sundquist signed Senate Bill 3151, the *Families First* Act, into law. *Families First* represents a dramatic change in Tennessee's social policy as well as a fundamental transformation for the Tennessee Department of Human Services (DHS) and in some ways, for the Division of Adult and Community Education (ABE). This change required a sweeping overhaul of the massive welfare system. How did it go from a political campaign promise to a fully implemented program?

Designing the program

A special Welfare Reform Task Force convened in May 1995 to design a welfare reform plan. The governor gave only a few mandates to the task force: that the plan be fair, have time limits, and require work. Other than these requirements, the task force had maximum flexibility to design the program. Leonard Bradley, assistant to the governor for policy, assembled the individuals who made up the governor's task force. Bradley said, "If I did anything right, it was to pick the group of people I picked to help with the program design." Task force participants, drawn primarily from state agencies, were individuals who were knowledgeable and had experience at the program level. "If we are going to get rid of a program that supports poor children, then we have to be really careful what we replace it with," said Bradley as he commented on the work of the group:

> *The political winds were blowing so strong in favor of welfare reform, in a way, I was scared that no matter what we designed, it would pass because there was the danger that the legislators would pass the political will of the moment.*

The task force met one day a week for seven months. In responding to the governor's charge, Bradley asked this question of the task force: "If we could do anything, what would it be?" Bradley said that, from the beginning, the goal for

the task force was to increase a family's capacity to be self-supporting rather than simply reduce the welfare rolls. A challenge for the group was the need to make welfare reform work for everyone and minimize the possibility of unintended consequences. Throughout the duration of the planning phase, the emphasis on families prevailed. Wanda Moore, task force member and former director of the JOBSWORK program, commented on the name:

> *The first name of the welfare reform program was Tennessee Works. A lot of people were in favor of this name. But in the end, the name* Families First *was chosen because the emphasis has always been on family self-sufficiency and the plan has a family focus. Everyone was concerned about the children.*

Task force members discussed the program needs from the perspective of their organizations, studied the pending federal legislation, examined the plans of other states, listened to the reports of experts, and assembled the information they needed. As the task force convener, Bradley described his job as striking a balance between political agents and program professionals. However, the emerging plan had more tentacles than an octopus. One tentacle of the welfare reform octopus was designing the education and training component. About 50% of the individuals receiving welfare had not completed high school. "From the start, there was an assumption that an educational component would be included in the mix of services that would be made available to *Families First* customers," said Moore.

> *We knew about the research that claimed early attachment to the workforce* [employment] *would ultimately lead to a higher wage. However, our legislature is very education oriented and there was never any effort to move to a 'work first' philosophy. The inclusion of educational services was never debated.*

Basic education activities intentionally postpone employment in favor of increasing the capacity of participants to earn higher wages.

Teddy Cook, task force member and assistant director of adult and community education noted:

> *The Department of Education and the Department of Human Services had a long history of working together. We had worked together on JOBS which was the forerunner of welfare reform. Because of our earlier relationship it was recognized that adult*

education had been an important component of helping people gain the basic skills they needed to enter the work force.

As the *Families First* plan emerged, it called for an eighteen-month limitation of benefits with an additional eighteen months of transitional benefits that included childcare, transportation, and health insurance. In order to participate in *Families First*, an individual was required to sign a Personal Responsibility Plan (PRP) that would include her or his long-term goals. All recipients of welfare without a high school diploma or GED would be tested to determine the grade level at which they were functioning academically. When the bill was originally introduced, it called for a mandatory educational component for those individuals who tested below the sixth grade level. Individuals at this level would be exempt from both the work requirement and the time limitation that would be imposed on others.

The legislative process

The *Families First* bill was introduced and the legislative debate began. Debate was also occurring in community and advocacy organizations, on the pages of newspapers, in public forums, and among neighbors. Seventeen formal hearings were held. Amendments resulting from this vigorous civic dialog helped strengthen the bill, according to Bradley. The original bill eventually had 42 amendments and received major bi-partisan support in the House and Senate.

As the bill was weaving its way through Congress, the task force continued to meet and plan. At one of the meetings, Louise Clifton, an adult education teacher, brought two of her students to report to the task force. The adult education participants described their experiences in an adult education class. "They were very persuasive," commented Bradley. As a result of this visit, Bradley visited their adult education classroom and volunteered to become a mentor.

The process taught me that mothers who receive welfare are a lot like other Tennessee mothers in that they are intensely interested in their children having a better life than they have had. It takes a lot of skill to be head of a household when you are only able to read at a sixth grade level. I was mentor to two women. I helped with math and reading, ate lunch with them, learned what was important to them, listened to their children. The experience of getting to know the adult education students, of meeting their children and attending their graduation was like seeing the burning bush. It was an increase of awareness and understanding of what it meant to be undereducated yet be head of a household and responsible for your children. I have a greater understanding of what it means to be

> *learning the same thing your kids are learning. I learned that kids are proud of their parents for getting a GED and that parents like being able to help their kids with their homework. I didn't understand what it would be like to not be able to read, or express yourself, or do simple math.*

One of the women for whom Bradley was a mentor has since gotten her GED. Bradley's enhanced understanding, Cook's persistance regarding the importance of adult education, and the public debate fueled by advocacy groups led to discussions about the appropriate grade level that a person should attain before being required to participate in the work component of *Families First*. The 5.9 grade level cut off seemed unreasonable to adult educators. Bradley commented that although the Tennessee legislature considers itself very education oriented, few legislators really understood the needs of undereducated adults, or the effort required to significantly improve basic skills. In fact, few people in the Department of Human Services understood those needs except for those involved in the JOBSWORK program.

The decision was made that those below the 8.9 grade level be excused from the work requirement and time limits. "This had some people upset," said Bradley, "because they thought that any easing of the work requirement would undo the entire system." As a result of the public debate, "Everyone's fingerprints were on the bill," Bradley commented. "In the end, it was a better bill." *Families First* was passed in the House and Senate by 132 of the 135 legislators.

The welfare reform legislation resulted in a program that cost 50% more than the cost for providing benefits the way it had been done in the past. According to Bradley:

> *It is a lot more expensive to address the problem than to look for a short term solution. When you try to design a program where the objective is to reduce the welfare rolls, and that is the sole criteria for judging success, you might succeed short term. But if you do not address the problem and build the individual's capacity for success, then it will blow up in the long run.*

Federal waiver

While the bill was going through the legislative process, Tennessee began to prepare the required waiver (permission to be released from certain federal requirements) for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Even though the federal government was about to pass TANF, Temporary Assistance

for Needy Families. "We wanted to go for a waiver because of the education and training components" related Moore. TANF is a work first program that discourages education and training because participants in education programs cannot be counted in the participation rate.

As amendments were written to the legislation, changes had to be made to the complex federal waiver. "All the while, our offices at the local level were trying to prepare themselves not knowing exactly what the final outcome would be," said Moore. This created a lot of confusion because the plan changed as the public debate ensued and amendments were added to the legislation. One way of dealing with the uncertainty was to involve the local DHS programs in the discussion and the decision making by communicating frequently and holding regular meetings. This helped them to have a sense of ownership of the process. Although this helped local DHS personnel, educational and training providers remained confused, because on some issues, there was no "state-approved" procedure. The procedures for implementing the Families First programs were developed at the local level. Because of the massive size of the change and the organizational transformation that went with it, there was extensive uncertainty about how the whole system would work and considerable organizational confusion. What is noteworthy is not the confusion which is to be expected in any monumental change effort, but the fact that the agencies involved in implementing the change survived and were able to cope with an unprecedented level of new policies and procedures that had been developed in record time. On July 25, 1996, Tennessee's request for a federal waiver was approved. TANF was signed only weeks later. Five weeks after receiving the federal waiver, the massive undertaking of implementing *Families First* across the state was begun.

Implementation of the *Families First* Program

Significant media coverage was given to the program when it first began. The DHS put particular emphasis on dispelling the myths that surrounded those on welfare. The media was at least partially successful in raising awareness and combating stereotypes by helping provide a more accurate picture of the diversity of welfare recipients.

Families First is employment-focused and participation is based on the agreement of welfare recipients to attain employment. Some safeguards, such as those to exempt certain people from the work requirement, are built into the program. There are exemptions for the aged, disabled, incapacitated, and caretakers of disabled relatives. In addition, if a county's unemployment rate is twice the state rate, then the individuals in that county are exempt until that statistic changes.

The program requires an individual to sign a Personal Responsibility Plan (PRP) in order to continue receiving benefits. The plan calls for parents to ensure children's school attendance, immunize their children, and establish paternity in order to receive child support and cash payments. (In Tennessee this is $185 a month for a family of three.) A work and training component includes the participant's career goals, work plan, and the opportunity to complete high school or obtain a GED. Individuals who sign the PRP receive child care assistance, Medicaid/TennCare coverage, rent freeze for public housing, and food stamps.

Components of *Families First* were drawn, for the most part, from services such as ABE, Job Placement, and Career Search that were already available in the state. The way the components were designed, participants receive services from a number of different providers; however, no cohesive system of services was put in place. Bradley said:

> *One of the things we have done was use a piecemeal approach to designing a group of activities to help clients improve their chances of long-term employment. Now we need to do something that pulls it all together into a cohesive whole. In addition, we don't know enough about how learning disabilities affect a person's ability to succeed. We are not satisfied with the services we currently are providing for the learning disabled.*

Profile of the Tennessee *Families First* family

Department of Human Services commissioned a study of *Families First* participants by the Center for Business and Economic Research, College of Business Administration, The University of Tennessee. *Families First: 1997 Case Characteristics Study*, drawn from the DHS database and a random sample of *Families First* participants who responded to a questionnaire during their regular appointments at DHS, presents a picture of families receiving welfare.

The average family consists of 2.6 persons. Females comprise 95.8% of family caretakers and their average age is 34.2 years. Over 91% have worked at some time during their lives, with 74% having worked during the last twelve months. Over 53% of the caretakers have a high school or GED diploma. The highest average grade completed was the eleventh. Of the 32.8% currently employed, the average wage is $5.42 per hour. Monthly benefits include an average of $148 in TANF (Temporary Aid to Needy Families) and $241 in food stamps.

The adult education component

After the federal waiver was received, the Department of Human Services announced that the Division of Adult and Community Education (ABE) was selected to provide the basic educational services. The adult education office has a statewide infrastructure in that there is at least one adult education program in every county. Many are in local school systems that employ a full-time adult education supervisor. In the first year, funds were provided for 220 adult education classes. Because of the statewide infrastructure of adult education programs in Tennessee, it was possible to start *Families First* classes in 97% of the counties on September 1, 1996. The program was phased in over a six-month period.

What is remarkable about the start-up phase of *Families First* is that the legislation called for agencies to work together on an unprecedented level. The program of services was extraordinarily complex and, while state-level providers had been working together, the local service providers often knew very little about the services provided by others. Workers at the Department of Human Services were unfamiliar with adult education programs. Not having a simple, effective way to communicate critical information about educational needs and progress was a barrier to the smooth functioning of the system, especially while providers were trying to figure out the communication channels.

Cook said, "It was smooth for the implementation of such a large program. A lot of thinking had gone into it ahead of time." In addition to providing adult education classes, the local adult education programs conducted the original assessment using the TABE, which determined an individual's grade level. This level was used to determine in which components of *Families First* the individual would participate.

Teacher training for start-up

The Office of Adult and Community Education asked the Center for Literacy Studies to provide start-up training for ABE teachers in the *Families First* program. Though administrators on the state level seemed confident about the start-up, at the local level many teachers reported that it felt as though the program was being put into place very fast. Training for teachers of the first group of Families First participants took place in August, 1996, and on September 1, 1996, programs began receiving *Families First* students.

As we prepared for *Families First* teacher training at the Center for Literacy Studies during the summer of 1996, the unanswered questions and uncertainties at

times felt overwhelming. But we had to go ahead with the training, despite the ambiguity about how the program would work. Margaret Lindop, a CLS staff person with many years experience as a teacher and teacher trainer, was the lead trainer, with assistance from other CLS staff. We also called on Patsy Medina, a nationally known teacher trainer and former staff person at Bronx Education Services to help us. Patsy became an invaluable member of the training team.

We did three, three-day trainings for teachers--one in Knoxville, one in Nashville, and one in Memphis. There were around 60 participants in each. In terms of content, we tried to do it all. On the first day of training, we asked teachers to reflect on their thoughts and emotions as they prepared to put this brand-new, groundbreaking program into place. In order to help teachers express their feelings, we did murals with participants' drawn or cut-out pictures representing their hopes and fears for the program. We did small group and large group discussions about the myths surrounding welfare recipients. When presented with the profile of the average *Families First* family, participants in the training were consistently surprised, assuming that most welfare recipients have more children, no work history, and better program benefits.

Other parts of the training focused on requirements of the program, particularly inter-agency collaboration and the role of the partners, including DHS and Vocational Rehabilitation, in the program. We involved a *Families First* "customer", a mother who participates in *Families First* and receives TANF, who spoke eloquently about what she saw as the barriers and the opportunities presented by *Families First*. We invited Adult Basic Education administrators and Department of Human Services and Vocational Rehabilitation staff to make presentations about the role of each partner in *Families First*, and expectations of ABE instructors. There were question-and-answer sessions, some of which seemed to leave training participants frustrated because of lack of clarity and conflicting opinion on policy and procedure.

We also attempted to do training about conflict management in the classroom, because both instructors and CLS staff thought that would be a major issue. Teachers we talked with felt unprepared to teach mandated students since most had previously taught students who attended programs voluntarily. We (CLS staff) didn't feel prepared to adequately assist teachers, so we hired a psychologist for that part of the training. Interestingly, neither participants nor CLS staff felt that part of the training went well. We wondered if our assumption about the need for an "outside expert" had been correct.

We also tried to deal with obstacles to student learning, like learning disabilities. We did sessions on how to identify and informally assess learning disabilities.

We reviewed what we knew about the referral system for adults who might need a formal assessment procedure. We did sessions on approaches to reading for adults with learning difficulties and on writing from students' experience.

As the trainings ended, and we read and re-read participants' evaluations and reflected on the experience, it seemed to us that teachers began their *Families First* classes with uncertainty, and some amount of trepidation. While they seemed glad for the opportunity to talk and think together at the initial trainings, they were frustrated that all their questions hadn't been answered.

Families First goes forward

During those first few months, the political atmosphere in the state was charged, with much discussion in the media about *Families First*. Many human interest newspaper articles about *Families First* customers appeared throughout the state. Those stories were often fairly sympathetic and portrayed families as caught in a system that didn't offer real alternatives. There was also much backlash: after a sympathetic story, it was common to see letters to the editor depicting welfare recipients as lazy, irresponsible, or even criminal.

While the "outside" world debated the merits of the program, the "inside" world of agencies and staff charged with carrying out the program were attempting to make the changes mandated by the program. One of the major shifts was in the role of the DHS caseworker. The caseworkers would no longer simply determine eligibility but would be case managers who coordinated an array of services available to *Families First* participants. Most importantly, they would listen to the *Families First* participant and help her or him really think through a number of options, assisting participants to formulate a plan toward self-sufficiency.

However, it was quickly apparent that sheer numbers and old habits worked against this change, and the change seemed to many in the adult education community to be unevenly implemented. Center for Literacy Studies staff often heard adult educators say that smallness of scale seemed to generally work for the program. If the DHS case manager didn't have too high a caseload, she or he seemed better able to work as a true case manager with the students, teachers said.

There was a great deal of emphasis placed by state-level policy makers on getting *Families First* participants through preparation programs and ready to take the GED. Perhaps some inexperience on the part of policy makers and others led people to believe that this would happen quickly for most learners.

As the first year of implementation passed, it became clear that there were significant differences in the degree to which agencies collaborated and were successful in carrying out the program. The best coordination between Department of Human Services and ABE seemed to happen when DHS caseworkers would come and sit down with *Families First* participants in their classrooms, hear what was happening in class and in their lives, and answer questions that participants and teachers had.

In the first year of *Families First*, the Fresh Start program seemed to be key to developing positive attitudes and helping with retention. Fresh Start is a voluntary six-week program of classes that addresses affective issues such as learning to recognize and celebrate success in its many forms and real-life barriers to success such as lack of clear goals. This program is facilitated by Department of Human Services sub-contractors with experience in teaching adults. The *Families First* customers who completed Fresh Start almost invariably talked about how the program profoundly changed and enlarged their ways of thinking about themselves and their potential. ABE teachers frequently said it was clear without asking which of their class members had been through Fresh Start. Unfortunately, all ABE *Families First* participants do not have the opportunity to go to Fresh Start classes because the number of classes is limited, and some choose not to attend.

Data at the close of the first year

When the program began in September 1996, there were approximately 92,000 families on the welfare rolls. By October 1997, the rolls had been reduced by more than 34,000 families. According to the Department of Human Services, of the approximately 58,000 families who remained on assistance, around 30,000 were exempt from the work/education requirements due to reasons such as their own disability, the need to care for a disabled relative in the home, age or incapacity.

Of the families that remained on assistance and whose caretakers were not exempt from the work/education requirements, 12,000 individuals were working full or part time, 5,000 were enrolled in ABE, and 11,500 were in specialized job training.

In the first year of the program, 978 individuals received a GED, 624 participants went on to higher education and training, and 1,132 went to work after they finished with ABE. The number of people that enrolled and then dropped out was 3,321. Cook commented:

What we don't know is the reason they dropped out or how many of those have come back. In some cases, people have to sign up two or three times before they finally decide to stay. Some dropped out because they got a job, married or their husbands got a better job. There were a wide variety of reasons that people left the program.

ABE Teachers' Perspectives

What I got [in my Families First *class] were students who had terrible things happening in their lives, yet were able to survive. I'll never look at someone on welfare the same again.*

—An ABE teacher in the *Families First* program

Teachers were charged with helping *Families First* participants improve their basic skills and get the educational credentials necessary for employment. As previously noted, during the first year of the program, Center for Literacy Studies was involved in the initial training of teachers. At the beginning of the *Families First* program, these teachers expressed fears and assumptions in public discussions and informal conversations at trainings and other events. These fears had to do with *Families First* participants and how programs, classrooms and instruction would be very different from what teachers had experienced in adult basic education before *Families First*.

The fears and assumptions heard most often before the program started included:

- *Families First* participants will be angry and maybe even violent in the classroom.
- Mandated learners won't learn.
- Personal habits and lifestyles of learners will make learning nearly impossible; classes and programs will have to be planned around control of clients, and ABE as we know it (a family atmosphere, relaxed and supportive interactions) will cease to exist
- Working in "the system"—dealing with the rules and the paperwork of *Families First*—will be intolerable for teachers.

During the second year (1997/98), CLS provided the initial teacher training, continued telephone assistance, produced a newsletter aimed at teachers, and facilitated a day of reflection for *Families First* teachers at the end of the year. This section of our report was mainly drawn from the written comments of about one hundred of those teachers participating in the reflection workshops who answered the question, "From your perspective, what have been the challenges

and opportunities of the *Families First* program?" The reality of their experience is very different from what most had expected in the beginning, according to teachers who wrote about it in May, 1998.

Assumptions about *Families First* participants

One of the most powerful fears at the beginning of *Families First* classes was that *Families First* learners would be angry and maybe even violent in the classroom. "I had heard about the [housing] projects and I was afraid of the violence and the people when I walked in to my *Families First* class," one teacher wrote. This was a sentiment we heard expressed repeatedly. The same teacher continued "but I have met some really wonderful people who have succeeded beyond my wildest imagination." That is perhaps the most common experience we found among teachers - a significant shift in perspective. Over time, teachers seemed to reject the myth and cultural stereotypes about welfare recipients and instead began responding to their own experiences with adults in their classrooms. The adults they saw as they walked into the classroom each day were people whose humanity conferred worth and potential, not worthlessness and limits. "*Families First* has brought talented, creative and bright people into ABE who may never have thought of education as an option."

As teachers and *Families First* students worked and "lived" together for 20 hours each week, the teachers' fears seemed to slip away. Conversations at training events and other teacher gatherings were no longer dominated by gloomy predictions of chaotic classrooms and violent learners. Instead, most teachers were moved to talk and write about the struggles and perseverance of their adult students.

> *The thing which amazes me most about the students is their resiliency and resistance in the face of great odds. I see students who have been on drugs and are now off, struggling day to day to stay clean, while also tackling great challenges in the classroom.*

There are many stories of growth and transformation of both students and teachers:

> *Martha—rough exterior, soft interior. She frightened me because I saw the exterior, the roughness, the temper. In my class, out of my class. Umpteen tracking (absenteeism) forms! She knew I meant business. Slowly, very slowly, her attendance improved. Then one day in December she appears outside my hallway—shaking and in tears. I listen to her story, her personal tragedy and I respond as a*

> *human being. I hug her and I listen. I provide phone numbers for her to call. I listen. Gradually, she begins to see the GED as her way out. In January she passes her GED—as she said "I did it for me!" She is allowed to continue in my class because her case manager knows that given a little more time, Martha will succeed. Gradually, Martha is becoming a self-confident, capable woman. I'm still frightened sometimes, but I see beyond the rough exterior now.*

In the almost two years of the program, many *Families First* teachers adopted a more holistic view of the learners: people are NOT the academic skills they possess or lack:

> *They are not dumb. They are intelligent. They all have gifts, things they can do. Most have a real desire to learn. Many have a very low self-concept. They need a lot of attention, understanding and love.*

Teachers describe the growth of trust and confidence in students:

> *I have been surprised (being very naive) at the lack of trust so many of the students feel—they have a wall around them. As I have learned more of their life experiences and come to understand more about what brought them to this point in their lives, I have been able to accept them as they are and to quietly work to lessen their resistance. It is a real thrill to experience their trust and confidence.*

Some teachers reported personal growth as a result of teaching *Families First* students. This teacher's consciousness was raised by reflection on his motivation for dismissing a student from class:

> *I had to expel a student from class. This has caused me to go back and examine what my motives were. Was it for the benefit of the class, so they could learn without his interruptions? Or was it because it deflated my ego for the student to put me down?*

Other teachers reported a kind of "politicizing" experience as they taught *Families First* students:

> *Before teaching in Families First, I thought that most people in America have equal opportunity. Can you imagine this? Students tell me, "I had to grab my baby from his crib and lie across him on the floor because the guns were going off everywhere." I am now beginning to be able to "imagine." Now I have a lot more empathy with my students who live in the projects.*

This teacher indicated that she was transformed in the process. Like the teacher whose quote begins this section, this teacher "will never look at someone on welfare the same way again."

However, although very common, the shift to a positive perspective of *Families First* students was not universal. A typical negative response to students was summed up by a teacher who said, "They don't want to work."

Assumptions about mandated learning

An assumption often made early in the *Families First* program was that mandated participants wouldn't learn - an idea that made sense to many. The thinking went like this: If an adult must come to school or lose his or her income, usually the only source of support for the family, then real choice in the matter has been removed, right? Learning takes effort, or usually at least some attention. If a participant were in class only because he or she had to be, why would we expect that person to put out the effort to learn?

Families First teachers' experience seems only to partially support that assumption.

> *Of the students who come because they have to come, two groups emerge. One group is sullen and resentful. The other group discovers that learning is fun. They, of course, make my day. It is even possible to—after months of "proving myself"—reach some of the first group. Not often, but it is possible.*

The group "who discovers learning is fun" may be a sizable number. *Families First* lore is rich with many anecdotes about personal transformations of both teachers and students. Like this one, many of the best stories star a hostile, unrepentant adult who doesn't want to come to class:

> *A student came to my* Families First *literacy class with the attitude that he had to be there, but didn't have to learn. He refused to*

> *participate and kept turmoil stirring in the class. A new student, who had an unbelievable desire to learn, entered the* Families First *class several weeks later. This became a true motivation for the first student. He began to do the activities and challenge the new student. They became friends and worked together to learn. As a result, both students motivated other class members. They made progress and had learned to read on a 1.0 level by spring break.*

Assumptions about the difference between *Families First* and traditional ABE

What have teachers learned about teaching *Families First* participants? Has adult basic education as we know it "ceased to exist" in Tennessee's *Families First* classrooms? The answer seems to be that, although teachers report a couple of important differences between *Families First* and other ABE classes, the supportive, mutually respectful tradition of adult basic education continues.

Over the past year and a half, we've heard many positive stories about *Families First* classrooms, and most teachers are excited about sharing their instructional activities. Carol Kiener, a *Families First* teacher in Johnson City Schools, wrote about the unique applied science project her class has developed, which also managed to combine aspects of community development and youth mentoring. Her reflection on the work also shows that creative teachers and learners can effectively weave a variety of basic skills into almost any learning experience.

> *Science has been very difficult for the students and seems to be—at first—of little use to them. I ran into a friend from UT Extension and we discussed this with others. We decided to start a hands-on gardening project. Three people from the extension office joined me in teaching about soil and gardening. We have now had 10 lessons and have grown seeds. My adults are more excited about this learning than my fourth graders! They have taken copious notes. How interesting that they have taught themselves the skill of finding the main idea and seen how details back it up. They have also learned about parts of a plant and decided gardening might be fun. The city is going to fence in our area for the "community garden" there in the projects. Our* Families First *students will mentor the teens in the area on gardening. They will all see the "fruits of their labor" and have seen a use for science.*

The most frequent comments from teachers regarding classrooms had to do with the need to create learning environments in which students were empowered to make decisions about what they studied or how they studied it, or decisions about the program itself. Teachers wrote:

> *We work more like partners, adult to adult, in the class. There is less distance between teachers and students than before.*

> *Include students in class planning to create ownership of activities.*

Teachers continually emphasized relationships:

> *Find opportunities to show support for students and advocate for them. This develops a bond with the student that makes them want to work with us.*

One teacher reported that "we hold Town Meetings in which students discuss what they'd like to see happen in school." The same program also offered a Learning Skills class, a unique and apparently very successful enhanced-orientation class:

> *We have a Learning Skills orientation class for incoming students. They spend 4 weeks in this learning preparation class to get ready to learn. They do motivational exercises, inspirational quotes, goal setting, peer support and oral sharing, writing, thinking. TABE testing is done while in class, as is writing on a career goal.*

Another teacher talked about why the Learning Skills class has been so successful:

> *A climate of peer support is developed. This is an important element in their success. They feel they are not alone; others are in similar circumstances. They feel surrounded with a friendly, supportive community.*

This teacher described a very compelling example of the power of a supportive community.

> *One day, as we worked on a "Thought for the Day," or critical thinking skills, the subject of violence led to the subject of rape. Half the women in the group, it turns out, have been raped, mostly at an early age. There was a tremendous emotional flood that*

> *washed through the group. Yet, it was positive because everyone, including instructors, gave support and understanding to each other. Even the lone male in the group came slowly to a supportive stance.*

Most teachers report that in many ways, their *Families First* classroom is not necessarily much different from any other ABE class they've taught. Learners support and care about each other; over time, trust is developed between the teacher and the class; and initial worries about a need for tight control have mostly been unfounded. Now much of the conversation overheard when *Families First* teachers gather reflects the same issues other adult basic education teachers discuss: concerns about testing and assessment, efforts to meet the needs of all students in a multi-level classroom, experiences with various teaching approaches and materials.

But teachers do consistently report two differences between their *Families First* class and other ABE classes. The first of these much-discussed differences is that learning difficulties among students are noticed by teachers more and more. The most able learners have moved through the system while a seemingly high number appear to be progressing very slowly at increasing their literacy level. Teachers feel distressed and want to be able to offer more help to these learners. They talk about feeling helpless in the face of the great difficulty these students are experiencing. "How we can help students who may never pass the GED?" they ask in training sessions. Teachers talk about what has worked for them, and they eagerly grasp each suggestion as it is offered by others. They wrote:

> *Encourage them to set a goal for today and to accomplish that goal today. It's most important that students set their own goals and that they be very short term. Be sure the student writes down the goal and reviews it and judges whether she has met it. Goals like writing her name and address or reading electricity meter - things she really needs.*

> *I have seen progress in some students who will be promoted to GED level and will eventually get the GED, but many others who will not. How can these students achieve success? A challenge is to help students with learning disabilities and learning problems, and their caseworkers, set realistic goals.*

The second difference between *Families First* classes and other ABE classes reported by teachers concerns the incredible difficulties that are part of many *Families First* participants' life histories, and the effect of these difficulties on

what happens in class. What is and has happened in their lives affects the climate in class and the ability of students to learn. The chaos that poverty creates—health problems, family crises, addiction and domestic violence—plagues a number of *Families First* participants, and all these difficulties contribute to sporadic attendance, elevated anxiety and depression, and difficulties in concentration and learning.

Several teachers commented that despite difficulties and obstacles, it was vitally important that they continue to believe in their students' potential for success. Teachers acknowledge that their encouragement and support for students is essential:

> *An important challenge, and one we have to do, is to remain excited and hopeful for our students.*

Assumptions about working in the system

In a traditional ABE class, the teacher is accountable primarily to the participants, and secondarily to a supervisor, who generally permits much classroom freedom. Teachers are free to follow their own course in determining what is best for the adult learners they teach, in evaluating the environmental factors in a person's life, and in making decisions about when to be supportive and when to be confrontive.

Implementing the *Families First* program caused an upheaval in the ABE delivery system, partly because the teacher was no longer the only source for decisions on matters of attendance, class content, and speed of learning. Teachers were expected to make the transition quickly from teaching academic skills and supporting their students' personal development to facilitating their students to become self-sufficient, productive workers. Suddenly, teachers were confronted with a body of regulations that seemed not only to usurp their authority but to be cumbersome to enforce.

Another phenomenon contributed to the frustration experienced by teachers. Since each case manager appeared to have decision-making authority with regard to the particular cases they managed, it was possible for two case managers in the same office to provide different interpretations to a teacher about a given situation. For example, caseworkers may have different interpretations of what constitutes an "excused" absence from class, or may place differing amounts of emphasis on a participant getting a GED versus going to the first available job.

Perhaps not surprisingly, managing the regulations, paperwork, and communications involved in this new, large and complex program has been difficult for both case managers at the DHS and for supervisors and teachers in adult basic education programs. Some have found that working "in the system" is constraining and difficult.

One of the tenets of the *Families First* program is that each community should tailor the program to meet local needs. In some places, adult basic education staff are very involved in making decisions about the *Families First* clients whom they serve. In others, they are not involved. In some places, communication appears good. In other places, it does not. It is often hard to tell where communication breaks down: is it within the Department of Human Services; between Human Services and the adult basic education program supervisor; or between the supervisor and teachers?

In any case, even though the *Families First* program "belongs" to DHS, the participants who are in school twenty hours a week have much more contact with adult basic education staff than with their caseworker or other DHS staff. Although official decision-making and flow of information is different in each local area, often teachers are the most available source of information for students about regulations and policy. For instance, depending on the local system, it may be in class discussions that learners find out that they can get financial help to arrange child care or to get their car fixed through the *Families First* program. In some cases, teachers might be asked to pass judgment on whether an absence is "excused" or not, or to relay other information about participants' needs to DHS.

Teachers appear to have a wide range of reaction to this level of involvement. Some want to concentrate on teaching designated skills and do not want to be distracted by the discussion and emotions swirling around program regulations. They resent class time being taken up by such things. "I am constantly explaining DHS regs to my students," one frustrated teacher wrote. Another felt it put her in an uncomfortable position as a go-between:

> *My students become extremely perturbed when I tell them information about* Families First. *This information usually comes from our immediate supervisor. They look at it as a reprimand or, in their language, being treated like children.*

On the other hand, some teachers want to know what is required of their students, and they feel they can incorporate questions and discussion of *Families First'* policies and procedures into class, making use of it as a topic for which there is much built-in interest.

Some teachers didn't want to be thought of as "the bad guy," a situation which most often occurs around reporting student absences. Excessive absenteeism also generates paperwork and eventual expulsion of the individual from the program. The "revolving door" allows students to re-enter after a short time, causing some teachers to wonder what the point of the policy is. They point out that when employed, adults are expected to have regular attendance. Others are happy that students get another chance to be successful in the program:

> *I hate it when I have to report too many absences for someone who had reason, like problems at home. Then I have to wait for the tracking form to be picked up, tell the student to wait for the case manager to call them and then start the process all over again the next day, week or month.*

A common criticism of *Families First* by teachers is that the program rules are inconsistently enforced, and there is confusion even within DHS about what the rules mean. Services provided and sanctions enforced seem to differ greatly even within a county. Some teachers report difficulty in obtaining the information they need to help their students understand what is expected of them.

One of the biggest worries expressed by teachers is that the program, though meant to encourage education, may in fact present educational barriers. Teachers report that non-educators expect adults to progress through programs evenly and quickly. That's not the real world, teachers say. Some students will learn more slowly than others. Some will never receive the credentials that our society, and their caseworker, expects:

> *Students are told by caseworkers that they should take their GEDs before they are ready. Realistically, it's going to take a long, long time for many students to get their GED. For some it will never happen.*

Teachers see some adults who move through the system, following rules because they have to, doing what is necessary, but never developing a sense of their own agency. Until and unless they do develop a sense of agency, teachers report, change has not really occurred:

> *The students who worry me the most are the young mothers—so many don't see the opportunity to change their lives and the lives of their children; they are simply doing what DHS told them to do.*

Even though Tennessee's welfare program emphasizes and pays for education, one of the barriers to student educational success mentioned by teachers is the emphasis on employment at any cost. The program may be too willing to sacrifice education, some teachers believe. Particularly frustrating to teachers is the policy that students must put in 40 hours a week (meaning that at least 20 will be employment) when they get to a ninth-grade reading level. The complexity of juggling work and education becomes too difficult for many, and programs experience a greater dropout rate when students come up against the 40-hour-per-week commitment rule.

Several teachers mentioned the difficulties that some of their students had, even once they got a job. Teachers see a need for continued support for new workers:

> *I would like to see* Families First *develop a transition program both for GED graduates and non-graduates who are entering the workforce.*

Isolation is another problem reported by teachers. Particularly in a rural county, an individual may be the only *Families First* teacher in the county. In a program that is supposed to be collaborative, she may feel very much alone. Despite the difficulties, teachers have found ways to collaborate and share information. "Invite DHS to special activities, such as pot luck meals and GED graduations," one teacher suggested. Another offered these tips on how to build relationships with DHS in order to improve the program and strengthen collaboration:

> *Have a DHS supervisor come in once a month to interact with students. Make opportunities to praise students to DHS, such as writing positive comments on reports. Have quarterly luncheons with DHS caseworkers and supervisors—also childcare providers, private industry, and employment security.*

Although stories of problems within the system abound, there are also many talented and committed staff who relate to their clients as individuals, such as the caseworker who permitted her more time in the program so she could be truly successful.

As *Families First* moved through its second year, there was increasing pressure to get people to work. By the end of the second year, after the initial wave of recipients moved off the welfare rolls, DHS noticed that the number of welfare recipients had "flatlined," or stopped declining. DHS identified barriers to leaving welfare, including mental health issues, domestic violence, substance abuse, and low basic skills due to learning difficulties.

Families First Enters Its Third Year

As *Families First* entered its third year, DHS staff turned to ABE for focused help in preparing *Families First* participants for work, not only in basic skills areas, but also in the "soft skills" requested most by Tennessee employers, such as dependability, following instructions, and getting along with others (Davis, 1998). They also requested that instructors focus on teaching basic skills in the context of work. This "contextualized learning" approach for *Families First* participants would help them apply their skills and be more successful in the workplace, DHS officials felt.

Together, DHS and ABE developed an action plan to address teaching basic skills in the context of work, including teaching "soft skills" for the workplace, as well as addressing the concern about the number of participants not progressing in their educational programs. Instructors were also asked to document their attention to work skills through the use of a plan book provided to them or through another method developed locally. Contextualized learning and "soft skills" were the focus of the annual 3-day *Families First* training, again provided by Center for Literacy Studies. The training took place in seven sites across the state. Although aimed primarily at instructors, the training also included many ABE supervisors and some DHS caseworkers.

Plans for this year also include more support for teachers through monthly teacher video conferences, a teacher discussion group online, curriculum assistance, and increased peer interaction and support among teachers. The first video conference will address questions of learner attendance, which has developed into an increasingly serious concern as the program has continued. The online discussion group, established by Center for Literacy Studies staff, is providing a forum for teachers to problem solve and share ideas. CLS, through support from the state ABE office, is offering an honorarium to teachers for the development of work-focused lesson plans and activities that can be shared on the CLS homepage and in book form to all Tennessee teachers. CLS, again with the support of the state ABE office, is offering incentives for teachers' participation in various action research projects around job shadowing and other approaches that combine basic skills with work activity. CLS continues to produce a teacher newsletter and to provide telephone, e-mail and library support for teachers who contact us.

As *Families First* continues, DHS staff increasingly emphasize that attaining the GED should not be the terminal point in a *Families First* participant's education. Instead, the GED class ought to be a transition to other training or education. DHS officials note that the average wage earned by *Families First* participants as they leave the program is not sufficient to lift a family out of poverty. DHS

believes that ABE instructors are best prepared to help participants gain further education and training that will help them earn significantly more at their jobs.

This year (1998), the addition of Welfare to Work resources is also seen as an opportunity for a number of *Families First* participants who have been unable to reach goals of self-sufficiency. Tennessee was among the states that drew down the maximum allowable resources to fund the program. (States must contribute a match, so some decided not to participate fully in the program.) Most of the resources are earmarked for the individuals who have the most serious barriers to overcome, such as a poor work history or substance abuse. *Families First* teachers received information on the program and how to make referrals for the use of resources by their students.

As the program matures, teachers continue to discuss their professional needs, including the need for a good salary and benefits. In 1998, the state-supported salary for part-time adult education instructors teaching twenty hours or more was raised from $11.00 to $15.00 per hour. *Families First* teachers are paid for 24 hours a week: 20 hours in the classroom and 4 hours of planning time. Occasionally local systems supplement the salary. A few systems put together different part-time jobs to form a full-time job for some teachers. But most systems don't supplement salaries, and most don't have full-time teachers. A number of *Families First* teachers seem (justifiably) unhappy about opportunities to get a full-time job with benefits, or to earn a living wage:

> *I've just spent a lot of money getting my master's degree but I earn a low salary anyway.*

The recent raise in hourly wages was a solid step forward, but until full-time jobs are available, the system will likely experience a great deal of turnover among teachers:

> *I'm using this time to prepare myself in case something opens that is a career opportunity—full time and benefits. I'm just doing my best with the opportunities that this job allows.*

Observations by Students in Families First Classes

The primary focus of this paper is to reflect the perspective of the administrators, policy makers and teachers with whom we have had conversations. At this time, we are not able to adequately represent the perspective of a vital constituency of the program: the adult learners themselves. We hope that the voices of participants will be added to this discussion in a clear and forceful way. But even

in this paper, which is of limited scope, it was helpful to the authors to reflect on what we do know from conversations with learners.

Although we have not conducted formal interviews with students in *Families First* adult education classes, we have had informal conversations with students from several programs. What we have heard in these conversations varies from class to class as well as from individual to individual.

Students may have come with their own set of fears and assumptions about the *Families First* program, but they are often positive about their experiences in *Families First*. Some students feel that they are gaining from the program: "new friends," "a chance to get out of the house," and "expanding my mind" were phrases we heard. There is a sense that progress is being made toward getting a GED and meeting educational goals. Students mentioned ways that the educational experience had helped them to be stronger, better parents and prepare for better jobs. They also commented that adult basic education improved the quality of their present lives; for many, school is something they enjoy, an activity that enriches their lives.

At the same time, people are not necessarily committed to staying in adult education programs if they are not mandated. The mandated nature of the program (as well as the flexibility with which local programs administer *Families First* classes) probably has something to do with this. The requirements that the programs use to help build work skills—being on time, not missing class when a child is sick, not bringing children to class—are interpreted by students as unwelcoming and rigid.

We found a lack of clarity among students about the provisions of *Families First*: confusion about what services are available and what the guidelines are. People were not sure why they are in class instead of in a job; all were unsure about time limits.

The dissatisfaction of some participants with *Families First* stems from a preference to be at home with children. This was felt particularly strongly by mothers with younger children. *Families First* allows mothers to stay home with infants until they are four months old, but then they must attend classes. While childcare is paid, it is not readily available in many locations, and most parents often prefer leaving their children with relatives. But if there are several children, this can mean "having them scattered out all over." Access to quality childcare is an issue faced by working parents as well. The issue of finding childcare can be approached in two ways: one, (as *Families First* rhetoric and teachers tend to) as one of the life skills that people need to develop; or two, as a larger issue that

needs to be addressed structurally in terms of what is best for children instead as an individual hurdle to be overcome.

Observations, Reflections and Questions

What is success?

Has *Families First* succeeded? Success may mean different things to different people—politicians, policy makers, citizens, teachers, adult learners. It is difficult to say whether *Families First* has succeeded until we know whether success means getting a GED, getting a job, or reaching other learner-determined goals.

With its emphasis on education, Tennessee's welfare reform program is an exception to the national trend which emphasizes short-term solutions to the complex and multi-layered issue of moving adults toward self-sufficiency. Even in a politicized national climate that encourages blaming recipients, *Families First* has refused to be simply a punitive approach. The program has acknowledged the importance of basic skills education by making it a vital part of welfare reform efforts. And, while retaining the work requirement common to other welfare reform programs, time limits on benefits do not start until a *Families First* participant has achieved basic skills at the ninth-grade level. *Families First* has provided additional services, such as child care and transportation, that have made participation in adult basic education possible for many adults.

Families First has encouraged a more collaborative and coherent approach to assistance for adults in need. Watching the implementation of *Families First* has reminded us of a basic human truth: relationships matter. When the case manager from Department of Human Services knows and maintains a good relationship with the ABE teacher, better things generally happen for students.

Relationships matter at all levels—among policy makers, between program staff, and between teacher and learner. As they got to know their *Families First* participants, teachers' stereotypical fears regarding changes to programs and classrooms faded.

In Tennessee, the *Families First* program has strengthened the infrastructure of adult basic education by increasing funding and by providing a reliable, fairly consistent "market" for our services. Yet we continue to send a conflicting message to ABE practitioners by acknowledging that all adults—including current public assistance recipients—need full-time jobs with benefits while at the same time not making full-time jobs with benefits available to *Families First* teachers.

The program has not been implemented without difficulty. Teachers continue to see their role more as facilitating individual empowerment and improving basic skills than addressing workforce development. Staff development efforts have been made more difficult by our own ambivalence about what seem to us the difficulties of adjusting the traditional role of ABE in building skills and facilitating personal development to an even broader role which includes helping learners get ready for the world of work.

Mandated learners can and mostly do learn; removing the choice about education does not necessarily mean that learning will not occur. However, that doesn't mean we should abandon the debate about the ethics of mandating adult education, or the debate about many other questions we face. How can welfare reform efforts avoid blaming recipients while supporting families as they move off public assistance? Will expansion of educational activities help improve the quality of life for welfare recipients who are leaving the welfare system? What changes do adult education programs need to make to support employment as an objective? Is there a role for an educational process with undereducated adults that is not work-focused? Despite the positive developments that have happened in Tennessee welfare reform, we cannot lose sight of basic questions that need to be continually debated by adult educators and others who see their role as active and involved citizens.

While the program continues to need improvements, Bradley commented, "We have been remarkably lucky that the economy has stayed strong while we have been implementing the program. In strong economies, employers are more willing to invest in training and education. In bad economic times, Congress may have to provide relief."

Those involved in designing the *Families First* plan are still convinced that basic skills play an important role in giving an individual an opportunity to achieve self-sufficiency. "It is frightening to change such a massive program that is so complicated and has so many essential factors," said Bradley. "It is especially frightening in the face of such a strong political imperative to act." He added, "Yet, as I look back on it, I don't know of anything I would do differently now. We are really experimenting, experimenting with people. But what other choice did we have?"

References

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THEMES FROM THE SMALL GROUP SESSIONS

As part of "The Impact of Welfare Reform on Adult Literacy Education Conference," small group discussion sessions were conducted after each paper presentation contained in this publication. A facilitator and a recorder were assigned to each session; and after each session, a summary of the session was prepared by the recorder so that we could capture the themes discussed. Based on the recorders' reports, it was possible to identify three main themes that characterized the discussion: (1) issues and problems raised by the Personal Responsibility Act; (2) how adult literacy instruction should respond to welfare reform; and (3) how the adult literacy education system should respond to welfare reform. An elaboration of these themes follows.

Issues and problems raised by the Personal Responsibility Act

Nearly all conference participants were concerned whether the jobs acquired by TANF recipients would be low-paying, dead-end jobs or good jobs. For most, a good job was defined as a job with income sufficient to permit self-sufficiency, a job that could lead to career advancement, and a job that provided benefits. Several noted that these ingredients—adequate income, career advancement and benefits—were job characteristics that many adult literacy education teachers did not enjoy.

Discussants were concerned with the skills gab for TANF recipients entering the workforce. Good jobs generally require skills and education that exceeds the education level and skills most TANF recipients possess. This is especially true for TANF recipients who are assigned to adult literacy before they are required to work. Where and how will TANF recipients acquire the advanced skills and education they need to qualify for good jobs and career advancement? Employers are reluctant to pay the costs, as are most state governments. Certainly, given the salaries of most TANF recipients, they themselves lack the capacity for investment.

Many conference participants lamented the fact that many learners enrolled in JOBS-sponsored adult literacy programs had been forced to terminate enrollment because of the work requirements of the new legislation. If previous learners are now employed, it makes sense to bring adult literacy to them through workplace education. However, few participants were hopeful that employers of TANF recipients would embrace the workplace education concept, let alone finance it.

The most commonly-expressed theme with respect to welfare reform was the need to prepare TANF recipients not only for employment, but also for self-sufficiency. Self-sufficiency means a living wage and hope for the future. Many believed that the new legislation was inadequate in this respect and that welfare reform had merely increased the numbers of people condemned to the working poor.

How should adult literacy education instruction respond to welfare reform?

Most conference attendees noted that while adult literacy education has traditionally responded to a wide range of learners' individual needs, there is now a one-size-fits-all mentality that focuses on narrow employment goals. It is vital for adult literacy to continue to meet learners' needs and to recognize differences in instruction. As one group noted, how can one treat a group of homeless, low-level TANF recipients the same as a group of learners who are almost ready to take the GED? Many were concerned that the legislation promoted a narrow vision of adult literacy that emphasized basic skills training rather than broad-based education. Welfare-sponsored adult literacy needs to do more than teach narrow skills if learners are to become employed in good jobs. At minimum, it must teach problem-solving skills and it must empower. There was concern that narrow adult literacy performance standards tied to employment would shape instruction in ways that prevented teachers from meeting a wide range of learners' needs.

Many felt that in the atmosphere of reform, adult literacy teachers were confused regarding their roles. Were they to be responsible simply for narrow basic skill gain or were they also to be charged with changing attitudes, assisting in job acquisition and providing employment information? If the role of teacher were to change in response to welfare reform, who was going to provide the staff development necessary to help teachers make the change?

Is the purpose of welfare-sponsored adult literacy to mainstream learners; that is, to equip them with the knowledge, skills and attitudes believed to be requisite for success in the dominate society? If so, should we not ask learners' permission before we proceed with the makeover? Accepting the questionable assumption that we should strive for this kind of mainstreaming, is it possible?

How should the adult literacy education system respond to welfare reform?

At the state level, the adult literacy education system typically involves, at minimum, the Departments of Education, Labor, and Health and Human Services. At the local level, it includes a variety of stakeholders including public schools, community colleges, learners, employers and case workers. Most felt that in the past this system had been very poorly coordinated and that lack of coordination had created waste and had impeded the ability to address learners' needs. Many conference participants noted that if adult literacy is to be successful with welfare recipients, it needs to be of sufficient intensity and duration. Under the JOBS program most welfare recipients received at least 20 hours per week of instruction, but under the Personal Responsibility Act many of those who were receiving at least 20 hours per week of instruction are now receiving far less. There was also the feeling that adult literacy had to provide for long-term needs as well as short-term needs. This will require better connections with providers of advanced

vocational and higher education as well as the means for TANF recipients to pay for it. It will also require better connections with employers.

Finally, conference participants recognized that the needs of welfare recipients varied by state. Needs in rural states, for example, differ substantially from needs in urban areas. Although differences in state welfare programs often make the program seem chaotic, to some extent the differences are valid adaptations to differing state contexts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

At the final session of the "Impact of Welfare Reform on Adult Literacy Education" conference, the participants developed draft recommendations for practice, policy and research. The draft recommendations were subsequently sent to all participants for further comment. Based on comments received, the following recommendations resulted.

Practice

1. If welfare recipients are to become self-sufficient, adult education—both basic and advanced—must be equal in importance to job acquisition.

2. The population served by adult literacy education should include the working poor as well as welfare recipients. Funds should be made available to enable this.

3. The mission of adult literacy for welfare recipients should be to promote learners' self-sufficiency. To this end:

   - The goals of learners, their families and the community must be respected and addressed. Learners' goals and needs must guide instruction.

   - Instruction must be of sufficient intensity and duration.

4. Support services must be funded and provided before and beyond initial employment. These include transportation, child care, health services, counseling and case management, and support for welfare recipients' entrepreneurial activities.

5. A high performance system for adult literacy education must be developed and implemented. This would include:

   - Better collaboration and coordination among state agencies that serve welfare recipients, providers and other stakeholders—particularly employers.

   - An expanded system of staff development that meets teachers' professional learning needs substantially and in-depth.

   - Instruction of sufficient intensity and duration both for welfare recipients assigned to adult literacy and those who are employed.

Policy

1. Welfare policy formation should be an open process. Policy decisions at the national and state levels should meaningfully involve all stakeholders in welfare reform, including welfare recipients. Information regarding policies under consideration should be readily available to all stakeholders.

2. Welfare policy should focus on promoting long-term self-sufficiency for welfare recipients rather than short-term employment gains. Welfare policy that merely adds to the number of working poor should be avoided.

Research

1. Realistic and fair performance standards must be developed, and feasible methods of measuring performance must be implemented. Adult literacy education practitioners should be consulted in the process of developing standards.

2. A longitudinal study should be implemented to measure the long-term benefits gained by welfare recipients who engage in adult literacy education.

NCSALL

National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy

The Mission of NCSALL

The National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL) will pursue basic and applied research in the field of adult basic education, build partnerships between researchers and practitioners, disseminate research and best practices to practitioners, scholars and policymakers, and work with the field to develop a comprehensive research agenda.

NCSALL is a collaborative effort between the Harvard Graduate School of Education and World Education. The Center for Literacy Sturdies at The University of Tennessee, Rutgers University, and Portland State University are NCSALL's partners. NCSALL is funded by the U.S. Department of Education through its Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) and OERI's National Institute for Postsecondary Education, Libraries, and Lifelong Learning.

NCSALL's Research Projects

The goal of NCSALL's research is to provide information that is used to improve practice in programs that offer adult basic education, English to Speakers of Other Languages, and adult secondary education services. In pursuit of this goal, NCSALL has undertaken research projects in four areas: (1) learner motivation, (2) classroom practice and the teaching/learning interaction, (3) staff development, and (4) assessment.

Dissemination Initiative

NCSALL's dissemination initiative focuses on ensuring that the results of research reach practitioners, administrators, policymakers, and scholars of adult education. NCSALL publishes a quarterly magazine entitled *Focus on Basics*; an annual scholarly review of major issues, current research and best practices entitled *Review of Adult Learning and Literacy*; and periodic research reports and articles entitled *NCSALL Reports*. In addition, NCSALL sponsors the Practitioner Dissemination and Research Network, designed to link practitioners and researchers and to help practitioners apply findings from research in their classrooms and programs. NCSALL also has a web site:
http://hugse1.harvard.edu/~ncsall

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NCSALL

National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy

Publications List

Reports

Reports are NCSALL articles and research findings. The following *Reports* are available:

_____ *Reports* #1: Merrifield, J. (1998). *Contested Ground: Performance and Accountability in Adult Education*. $10

_____ *Reports* #2: Purcell-Gates, V., Degener, S., & Jacobson, E. (1998). *Adult Literacy Program Practice: A Typology Across Dimensions of Life-Contextualized/Decontextualized and Dialogic/Monologic*. $5

_____ *Reports* #3: Tyler, J., Murnane, R., & Willett, J. (1999). *Estimating the Impact of the GED on the Earnings of Young Dropouts Using a Series of Natural Experiments*. $5

_____ *Reports* #4: Bingman, M., Smith, C., & Stewart, K. (1998). *Practitioners Speak: Contributing to a Research Agenda for Adult Basic Education*. $5

_____ *Reports* #5: Rudd, R., Zacharia, C., & Daube, K. (1998). *Integrating Health and Literacy: Adult Educators' Experiences*. $5

_____ *Reports* #6: Beder, H. (1999). *The Outcomes and Impacts of Adult Literacy Education in the United States*. $10

_____ *Reports* #6A: Medina, P. (1999). *The Outcomes and Impacts of Adult Literacy Education in the United States—Appendix A: Abstracts of Studies Reviewed*. $5

_____ *Reports* #9: Rudd, R., Zahner, L., & Banh, M. (1999). *Findings from a National Survey of State Directors of Adult Education*. $5

_____ *Reports* #10: D'Amico, D., Levenson, A., & White, C. (1999). *The Impact of Welfare Reform on Adult Literacy Education: Conference Papers and Themes from Small Group Sessions*. $5

Focus on Basics

Focus on Basics is the quarterly publication of NCSALL. The following issues are available:

_____ Vol. 1, Iss. A (Feb. 1997), *Research*

_____ Vol. 1, Iss. B (May 1997), *Reading*

_____ Vol. 1, Iss. C (Sept. 1997), *Multilevel Classrooms*

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